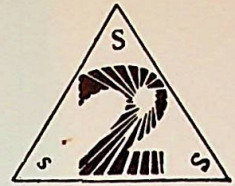


The Tri-Ess

The Femme Mirror

Femme Mirror



Volume 19 Issue 2

Spring 1994



The Official Publication of The Society for the Second Self, Inc.

Spring 1994

The Femme Mirror Spring 1994

The Femme Mirror is the quarterly journal of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., a non-profit corporation. National office: P.O. Box 194, Tulare, CA 93275. Submissions to The Femme Mirror should be sent to: The Femme Mirror, 8880 Bellaire B2, Suite 104, Houston, TX 77036. Letters to the Editor may be directed to Frances Fairfax in care of The Femme Mirror, or to Brenda Thomas, 6804 E. Highway 6 South #334, Houston, TX 77083.

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The Femme Mirror is absolutely committed to protecting the security and confidentiality of all Tri-Ess members. In order to ensure this protection, the Mirror conforms to the following editorial policy:

- 1) The Femme Mirror will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.
- 2) We encourage all contributors to the Mirror to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
- 3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
- 4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner. Thank you.

- Your Mirror Staff

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Thank You, Volunteers! And special thanks to the ladies of Tau Chi Chapter, who cheerfully stuff the Mirror into envelopes and pizza into themselves four times a year! We all appreciate you very much!

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Spring 1994

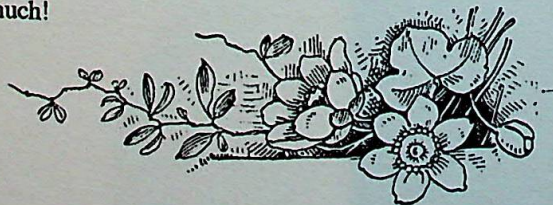


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If You Are Moving.....

Please Notify us of your Change of Address:

Donna Martin
P.O. Box 597859
Chicago, IL 60659

**PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR
TRI-ESS MEMBERSHIP NUMBER!**

About Our Cover Girl...

Our Cover Girl this time is affectionately known by many, many sisters in Chi Chapter and around the country as "Barbara #1". She is certainly #1 in the hearts of many Little Sisters with whom she has corresponded over the years. One shy sister marked as the high point of her life the time Barbara coaxed her out to attend her first Chi Chapter meeting. Barbara became known as "#1" because she was the first "Barbara" in Chi Chapter, and for many years was the only one by that name. Now, with so many Barbaras in Chicago, something is needed to tell them apart! But, there's only one "Barbara #1"! Barbara, we all love you!

About this issue....

This time around we are gathering articles into special sections. Hey, Good Lookin' is our How-To Section, and we also have three good Book Reviews this time. CD by Sherri Belmar is back with five strips this time. Sherri reports her new son keeps things pretty lively, but she managed to find the time to cartoon for us.

S.P.I.C.E. 1994 has been scheduled for July 6 - 10 at the Ramada O'Hare, site of so many wonderful conventions. Special room rates are only \$59/night. An extra day has been added to this year's program to allow for more free time and more great seminars. Many of last year's faculty will be back, plus some new ones. Plan now to come, ladies! Husbands' programs and child care will be provided. For more information, write S.P.I.C.E. Coordinator

Linda Peacock at her new address:

P.O. Box 24031, Little Rock, AR 72221

Also, Holiday En Femme 1994 is coming up in November in New York City! See the enclosed registration form, or check out the ad on page 54.

Drs. Vern and Bonnie Bullough are conducting a new survey. Please take the time to complete and return the copy enclosed. If you didn't get one with this issue, write us for another one. Let's help out those researchers who are working hard on our behalf!

We hope you enjoy the many great articles and stories in this issue. But, please remember that the *Mirror* is your journal. We need your material if we are to have anything to publish. Please send your articles, photos, poems and cartoons to our

New Address:

The Femme Mirror
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We REALLY appreciate material submitted on computer disk. We use PageMaker 4.01 for Macintosh, with the capacity to import and read most MS/DOS system disks in Word Perfect or other word processing programs. (3-1/2 inch diskettes preferred.)

We are actively recruiting volunteer "Mirror Secretaries" with computers, who can type about five pages' worth of Mirror copy each quarter and send us the finished product on disk, ready to "plug in". We would also love to have those of you who are planning to attend various events throughout the year to "cover" them for the Mirror. Your photos and first-hand impressions will bring the event home to many who cannot attend. Share your fun with your sisters!

3 Thanks to all for helping us produce the Mirror! Spring 1994

Executive Director's Page

Greetings from Tulare, California!

I have been informed that the new Information Brochure for interested persons is almost ready. If you need several copies (or more) drop me a note and we will send you at least one copy.

I received a letter from a (real) girl in Maryland who is looking for a man-friend who crossdresses. Her first name is Anita and she has indicated that she had a relationship with a fellow for almost seven years. He started crossdressing about three years ago. She states: "At first, I thought he was really sick, but I have to admit what he was doing really turned me on and we were having the best sex of our lives. Last Halloween I was able to convince him to go the whole nine yards. I bought him a suede mid-calf skirt and an angora sweater, a bra, panties, pantyhose and a blonde wig, and I convinced him to go out to a bar with me dressed as a woman. I could tell I had done a good job by our dog's reaction. Our dog always barks at strangers who enter our home. When the dog first saw Jack leave the bedroom in drag, it barked up a storm. Jack and I went to a bar in a nearby town where nobody knew us. We had a few drinks and nobody discovered our deception. That was the most exciting night of my life, and the sex we had that night was fantastic. Jack and I broke up in December. He left me for a woman with bigger boobs. I am now looking for a man to take Jack's place." So, folks, there you are. Those single members who want an adventure should write to me and I will provide the complete name and address for you. Good luck!

Laurie from Pullman, Washington, recently wrote about an article appearing in a local college newspaper, asking me to put the people "straight" concerning crossdressing. That I have done. Then, I had a letter from an anonymous sister who asked that I write to Discovery magazine concerning their use of "gender" when the word should have been "sex." I have yet to Spring 1994



Executive Director Carol Beecroft

do it. Perhaps this weekend will see the letter typed.

And did you see the National Enquirer magazine, which featured a whole page about crossdressing?! It was a "nice" article, too - no two-headed-monster type of article. It was very factual and to the point. Of course, the article did suggest that all crossdressers are RICH! Wow! Maybe I should be! In the article there was a picture of my male-self along with a picture of my femme-self. And another picture of Norma helping me with my makeup. Kind of fun! The photographer actually came up from Los Angeles right after the earthquake and took double the time to get to Tulare. He actually spent about three hours shooting pictures. He has promised me some copies of the pictures for the Femme Mirror and my scrap book.

I got hold of the Family Circle magazine for February 22. In it appeared an article entitled, "Who Invited Them Into Your Home?" Unfortunately, they included crossdressers along with child molesters, music videos with misogynist themes, neo-Nazis and other violent people. I wrote to the magazine, strongly objecting

to their including gentle crossdressers with these violent and criminal persons. I wrote a two-page letter, and included information dealing with crossdressing and our sorority. I hope the editors will think the letter sufficiently interesting and pertinent to publish it. Ms. Granfield, the writer of the article, was very much misinformed about us, and I said so. I am enclosing a copy of the letter. (See "Letters to the Editor.") I think more of you gals out there should ALSO be writing such letters.

Tri-Ess will be one of the sponsors for next year's International Congress on Crossdressing, Sex and Gender, to be held at California State University, Northridge. It is being organized by the Center for Sex Research. The time will be February 23-26, 1995. Sally Hunt

and I will be "reading" a paper there, and I have been asked to do a workshop during the gathering. Papers are invited on transvestism, transsexualism, and all aspects of non-conforming gender expression. The Bulloughs are expecting a wide-ranging number of viewpoints summarizing and critiquing current research in biological, psychological, sociological, cultural, and historical aspects of gender crossing. Particularly encouraged will be organized sessions which will allow widespread discussion of where we have been, where we are going, and what we need to do to come to terms with a variety of gender behaviors. Interested participants are requested to submit four copies of the abstract of the proposed paper or session. I discussed this Congress with Jane, our Board Chairman, and we agreed that a donation of \$200.00 was in order. There will be other sponsors of this very important Congress. You might plan to attend.

After my recent visit to Calgary to visit a dormant chapter, I received a letter from Audrey. She indicated: "Our group certainly enjoyed your chart talk on Tri-Ess...I believe that you have stirred up a considerable interest on the part of a number

Editorial Expressions

by Brenda Thomas

of our members who had not joined the national organization." She went on to write that at the end of the meeting, a sister came up to her and asked that Audrey forward a Tri-Ess application to the National Office. She concluded her letter by saying that: "Your visit has made us all feel much closer to Tri-Ess." I also felt great after my visit. I look forward to bringing my "chart talk" to YOUR chapter soon.

I still give radio interviews. I did one recently for Station KIDX in Billings, Montana. Derek Haskins was the host of the show. I guess I educated some more people about crossdressing. Talking about educating people, I spoke to a Social Psychology class recently. Sally Hunt is the teacher of this class at Fresno State. I like the opportunity to walk around the campus, as just another gal going to a class.

Did I mention in a previous column that our new Information Brochure was written by RuthAnn, who lives in Wisconsin? She wrote the first brochure over ten years ago, and she did a beautiful job of reworking the material into a more up-to-date introduction to crossdressing and Tri-Ess. I know she took many, many hours doing the job, and I want you gals to know there are such people as RuthAnn who are willing to put in the time to help our Society. What would we do without sisters like RuthAnn? THANKS, RuthAnn, for a great brochure!

And I finally "met" a female crossdresser from the Kansas City area. We have exchanged several letters, and at my request she wrote a short autobiography about herself and crossdressing. She also enclosed several pictures. She does look like a fellow, alright, and she certainly writes well. She uses the name of "Eli." Thanks, Eli!

That's about it for this time. Perhaps I will be able to work up an article, next time, concerning children of crossdressers and what they actually think about their father's crossdressing. It should make interesting reading.



Editor Brenda Thomas

I have just finished reading a most distressing paper, one adopted by the International Conference on Transgendered Law and Employment Policy, (ICTLEP), and which they "shall use their best efforts to disseminate" to all involved in the medical treatment of transsexualism. These items don't directly concern me, as I am not inclined to be transsexual. They do, however, indirectly concern me because I am seeing a total disregard for the accepted Standards of Care established by Dr. Harry Benjamin and adopted by the medical profession for many years.

For those of you who are not familiar with the "Standards of Care", these are the guidelines that have been accepted by the medical community in the treatment of transsexualism, as defined as Gender Dysphoria in the DSM IIIR. These are standards that have been adopted to insure that those who are diagnosed as gender dysphoric receive the maximum amount of care to best assure that hormonal and surgical sex reassignment is not done on an elective basis. Also to ensure that the maximum amount of counseling is given to the individual to best assure their easy transition into the lifestyle of their new sex.

All the reading I have done on the "Standards of Care" indicates they are set in place to ensure the involved medical professionals are competent and experienced in their field, and that all necessary counseling has taken place.

Now I read that "Transsexualism is an ancient and persistent part of human experience and is not in itself a medical illness or mental disorder." Hence, the desire to eliminate transsexualism per se as a mental disorder from the upcoming DSM IV, because many, if not most, of the patients the doctors see for gender medical services (hormones, surgery) do not require any psychological services.

PARDON ME! Would someone please show me ONE person who presents himself for hormonal or surgical procedure that does not require psychological services.? This is a person who is going to undergo a complete psychological change in his personality! If that doesn't require some sort of psychological service, then I do not know what does. I do not know of a reputable doctor who will administer hormones without extensive blood tests and psychological evaluations to ensure that all standards are being met.

What we are seeing here from ICTLEP is hormonal therapy and sexual reassignment surgery ON DEMAND! The basis for these findings is presented because: "The Health Standards of Care were developed in the wake of widespread dissatisfaction by many in the transgendered community with the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care." In other words, those who desire surgery, but are denied after extensive testing, are dissatisfied with the process and still wish to pursue "treatment" that could be detrimental to their own wellbeing.

Upon examination of the people on the board of ICTLEP, I see four attorneys and one CPA. (How would these same attorneys feel if the American Medical Association took it upon themselves to redefine the "Standards of Care" or the "Ethics Code" for the Bar Association?) Is something or someone missing here? Where are the doctors, psychologists, social workers, therapists and sex counselors or marriage counselors? Could you imagine the chaos that would take place in the medical professions if everyone could walk into a doctor's office, self diagnosed, and request a specific treatment on demand?

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What hypocrisy! Oh, the ICTLEP has seen fit to protect themselves and the doctors by including in its written material an "Informed Consent and Waiver of Liability" form. Now, isn't that comforting! I have heard from informed sources that these "Informed Consent and Waiver of Liability" forms are totally worthless pieces of paper. Not being one versed in the law, I have no comment on the validity of such forms, but since when have they stopped people from suing their doctors if results didn't measure up to expectations?

Reading further through their paper, I find certain definitions, one being GENDER. Per their paper GENDER is defined as "The characteristics of a continuum of role types from male to female, with such characteristics including behaviors and sexual anatomy, and being labelled "masculine" and "feminine" as the polar extremes." In the next line they define TRANSSEXUALISM as "The condition of wanting to change one's gender to better match one's sex." Are we performing a brain operation here or what? I thought we had already defined sex as sexual anatomy. That means either male or female as evidenced by one's genitalia.

They further state "Transsexuals do not really change their sex - they are born with that." If one removes, changes or alters their genitalia (which determines one's anatomical sex) is that not changing their sex? These people are advocating that SEX is in the brain and not in the body. What has happened to all of the teaching, educating and fighting that the "Gender Community" has done over the years, trying to convince the general populace that SEX is biological, and GENDER is psychological? Or SEX is between your legs and GENDER is between your ears. Are we now to change canoes in the middle of the rapids?

Don't get me wrong. I am all in favor of primary transsexuals getting all the help, both psychological and surgical, they can to better make their anatomical sex congruent with their psychological gender. But I am also adamantly opposed to the secondary transsexual being able to schedule surgical sex reassignment on demand.

Let's all settle down and go back to the basics. I have known too many people who
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have had surgery, thinking it was the end-all, only to find themselves some of the most depressed people on the face of this earth. How many secondary transsexual suicides are there each year? How many secondary transsexuals are there in long term, extensive therapy because they have found that surgery did not answer their crying need for expression? Now, having found that surgery is non-reversible, they are looking for a way to just cope.

As I stated earlier, I am not a transsexual nor am I inclined in that manner. So being an outsider looking in, so to speak, I decided to ask others who are transsexual if I was off base in my thinking. Surprise, surprise! They feel the same way I do. While they are in favor of making it somewhat easier for those who need surgery or medical services to obtain them, they are not in favor of surgery on demand. They are strong proponents of the "Real Life Test" process endorsed by the Benjamin Standards of Care. They are in favor of the standards in place at this time.

What they do wish is easier access to the medical services, access to the professionals involved, the list to include attorneys, endocrinologists, therapists, psychologists, and all related services. They also are in favor of support from their insurance company and their employers. They would also like to see some sort of national fund established for assistance of transsexuals in transition. It seems like so many of them are in a state of near poverty. Realizing how hard it is to transition and keep one's employment intact, makes it easy to see why they are in such a state.

I would strongly urge the ICTLEP to move away from trying to establish "Standards of Care" for a profession to which they do not belong, and move in a direction for "Standards of Care" in a profession to which they do belong. I would urge them to help bring the necessary changes to the forefront to assist those in need of assistance. With so many legal minds at work in this area it should be a relatively simple task to set the wheels in motion, and give the help where help is really needed. I urge all of you to talk with those who have been through the process to see where the help is needed. More can be learned from history, than from trying to predict the future.

My purpose in this article is not to undermine the work of ICTLEP, but to point out the other directions that are possible for them to travel. I am a proponent of those primary transsexuals receiving whatever help is necessary in achieving their ultimate goal. What I am against is the "secondary" transsexual having access to surgery on demand without the proper care, counseling, and life test required by the "Standards of Care" now in place.

I have heard too many horror stories from people who have jumped into transsexualism with the help of so-called "helping professionals" who have no idea of what they speak. Just read some of the stories of the people who have gone to Mexico to get their "surgery on demand"! Where does this leave these wonderful people?

I see too many people who say, "If I could only have a sex change, what fun life would be, what few cares and obligations I would have!" Well, do I have news for them! The cares and obligations do not go away, and the fun - well - you make your own fun. Too many think changing their sex is the ultimate end-all - the start they never had. For the primary transsexual this is true; for the secondary transsexual it is just the beginning of a horrible new existence that has solved nothing yet created a multitude of new problems.

Any rebuttals to this article may be directed to:

Brenda Thomas
6804 E Hwy 6 South #334
Houston, TX 77083

Thank you.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions and views expressed in the *Femme Mirror* are those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of The Society for the Second Self, Inc., its Officers and Board Members.

A Few Words From Jeanette

What's In A Name?

What's in a name? A rose by any other name (assuming it were a member of the crossdressing community) would be known as "Michelle".

What's the deal, Lucille? (or should that be Loucille Lee?) How do transgendered people choose their names? I realize there must be a method with which I am unfamiliar that explains how we end up with more Michelles than Carter has pills. (Or should that be Carter Anne?)

It can't be as simple as John becoming Joan, Dan changing to Danielle, Patrick to Patricia, Ray to Rachel, or Mike to Michelle. In my entire life, I have not met, heard of, read about, or in any way become aware of enough Mikes to make that many Michelles.

I'm not sure how we choose our monikers, but maybe your story is as simple as how I became Jeanette. When I interviewed to join Tri-Ess, Jane Ellen Fairfax asked,

"What do you call yourself?"

"Huh?" I replied.

"When you're en femme, what do you call yourself?"

"I've never called myself. I always know where I am."

"No! No! You don't understand. What name do you use?"

"Oh!" I replied, and immediately started trying to think of a name, since up to that point it hadn't crossed my mind. I hurriedly tried to think of a female name. The first letter of my name is "J", so I immediately started thinking, "Jean, Joan, Jane (no, that's no good, that one's been taken), Janice, Joyce, Joy, Jessica, Jeanette..."

Tick, tick, tick....I needed a name. I didn't want this person interviewing me to think I was an idiot. (It would be months later before she realized that.) My mouth opened and "Jeanette" came out. I would have had to join the local open group had Jane Ellen followed with, "And what's your middle name?"



One Name Is Not Enough

In retrospect, I'm surprised I wasn't asked for a middle name. After all, at this point I had met a grand total of one crossdresser -count 'em: one crossdresser - and she had two given names.

Genetic females are only called by two names when, as a rule, they are:

- 1) a child, and
- 2) have done something bad.

For example:

"Sally Anne! Who told you it was OK to give the cat a haircut?!" or,

"Betty Sue! Look at your shoes! I just mopped that floor!"

We "Joanie-come-latelies", however, seem to think we have to make up for all the years we were called "Ralph" or "Bubba" by prescribing ourselves a double dose of female names. So we find Jane Ellen, Jackie Anne, Kimberly Rose, and Michelle Lee, Michelle Dee, Michelle Sue, Michelle Elaine, etc., etc., etc.

Exactly The Same, Only Different

Some of us, with a real dearth of imagination, use a feminine version of our male name. Now, this is much easier if your male name isn't Bubba, Harold, George, or Cleophus. Thus Gene can put on his heels and still be Jean. Or, Jerry can be Jerri, or Jheri.

The only time this gets sticky is when you telephone a fellow crossdresser with, "Hey, Jean, this is Bubba!"

"Hi, Bubba! But you're talking to Jean, not Gene."

"Oh, sorry, my mistake. I was calling to see if you had spoken to Jheri."

"Jerri with an 'i' or Jerry with a 'y'?"

"Huh? Either!"

"Well, I spoke to Jheri yesterday, but I've not seen Jerri or Jerry in weeks."

Where Have All The Flora's Gone?

You would think that with all the crossdressers out there you could find at least one Flora, Ollie, Mable, Sadie, Ruth, Esther, Lorena (never mind; that one's been tainted), or Agnes. These are fine solid names that are going to waste while 80+% of new members choose either Michelle or Karen. Perhaps we should learn from the Muslims. When Cassius Clay converted, he became Mohammed Ali.

Maybe the Board of Directors should take on the task of assigning names. If not, where will we be in 20 years? We'll have Michelles who must be identified as "Michelle XXIV, the big, red-headed one with the tattoo from Waterloo" to differentiate her from "Michelle XIV, the



short one with pierced ears and a gold tooth, whose twin brother is a steel erector in Atlanta."

Yes, for everyone's sake, I advocate the Board choose names in the future. I'll withdraw my request if but one Michelle will see the light and change her name and perhaps set a trend.

What do you think of "Myrtle Pearl"?
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Of Sharks, Jellyfish and Dolphins

By Jane Ellen Fairfax

The shark is a solitary hunter. He lives off his aggressiveness. Gliding silently through the water, he strikes swiftly and unexpectedly, staining his environment with the blood of his fellow creatures. Above him floats the jellyfish. A creature without a backbone, he influences his environment very little. Rather, he bobs along where the sea takes him, and frequently meets death washed up on shore.

In the gender sea live sharks who with rending words stain the community with the blood of their colleagues. Some are great white sharks - gifted people who, tempted by lust for control, strike at others to aggrandize themselves. Others are dogfish - petty empire-builders who want to be seen as big fish. Among them there is no loyalty. When one is perceived as wounded or weak, the others rush in for the kill. Despite their aggressiveness they are neither safe nor happy. Theirs is a world of violence.

Others in genderland are jellyfish. Drifting with the tides, their sole thought seems to be the next party. Whether they are solitary or in schools of hundreds is purely accidental. Primitive creatures, they do not communicate with one another. To attempt to lead them in a common cause, or to warn them of shoals ahead, results only in nasty stings.

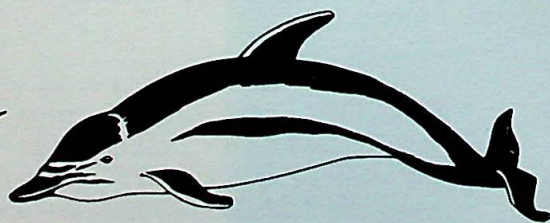
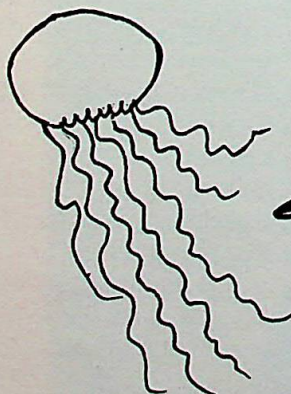
Consider, however, the dolphin. Like Tri-Ess, a dolphin pod is an extended family unit. When young are born, the females gather around to nudge the little fellows to the surface for their first breaths. Together, dolphins play and hunt for food. One never sees a dolphin attacking another; hers is to nurture, not attack. Communication among dolphins is of the highest order. By

schooling together they deter the shark from attacking susceptible members. Joining together in community action, they assert their right to their lives as dolphins. The shark, despite his baleful eye and rows of teeth, must swim off to find other prey.

So it is with Tri-Ess. Like the dolphins we live united in a community with a common identity and common goals. We are interested, not in attacking others, but in nurturing one another as we work together and travel together on our voyage of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Although we are not sharks, we need not be jellyfish. By good deeds we can make the gender sea a healthier environment for all. Like the dolphins we can, by joining together, assert our right to our identity. And the sharks shall not prevail against us.

Whenever we read anything in the genderland press, we should imagine the facial expression of the writer. Do we see the guileless, smiling face of the dolphin, or the bloodstained teeth of the angry shark?

Read, understand, and act accordingly.



Roger's Notebook #85

by Roger E. Peo, Ph.D.

In Memoriam

Dr. Roger Peo Passes Away

Poughkeepsie, NY, 4/7/94: At 7:00 AM, Thursday, April 7, Dr. Roger Peo, less than two months after first being diagnosed with lung and bone cancer, passed away quietly at his home in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Dr. Peo, a noted sexologist and long-time friend of the transgendered community, was the author of the popular advice column on gender issues, "Roger's Notebook." Yvonne Cook, IFGE Director of Operations, stated, "Roger was a member of the first IFGE Board of Directors in 1987, and was one of the first psychotherapists to become actively involved with the gender community. Roger was there for a lot of people over the years who needed his knowledge and help. He will be missed."

In an unprecedented move in recognition of his many contributions and achievements, the IFGE Board of Directors dedicated the eighth annual Coming Together - Working Together convention to Dr. Peo. Merissa Sherrill Lynn, IFGE Founding Director, added, "In addition to his many personal contributions to our community, Roger was a pioneer for building bridges between our community and the professional community. Because of that, and because of the importance of continuing his efforts to build bridges, I am proposing to the IFGE Nominations and Awards Committee that we establish a new award. This award would be named in his honor, and be given to a helping professional who has served our community far beyond his or her professional responsibilities. This award will ensure that Roger's work will be continued, and his many contributions will never be forgotten."

A memorial service was held at 3:00 PM, April 17, at the Unitarian Church in Poughkeepsie, New York. Dr. Sheila Kirk gave the eulogy on behalf of the transgendered community. Condolence cards may be sent to: Mrs. Victoria Peo, P.O. Box 3445, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603.

IFGE PRESS RELEASE

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A theme that I have examined from time to time in earlier columns is the motivation for male-to-female crossdressing. Asking the average crossdresser why he crossdresses is likely to elicit some response such as, "I am exploring femininity," or, "I just do this to relax." Recently this topic has come up in various newsletters from around the community and in some personal correspondence I have received. The interesting thing is that the tone of the writing has changed dramatically.

Initially, there was never a reference to an erotic component and there was always the rationale that the crossdresser was trying to understand something about that elusive thing we label femininity. More recent writings acknowledge that there is (or was) at least a sensual component if not a truly erotic one. The other perspective is that many crossdressers remain "men in dresses" rather than some semblance of a woman.

Some of these writings are either by women or written for newsletters that address crossdressing within a male-female couple. What these authors seem to be saying is that there is often little behavioral or emotional shift when the man puts on women's clothing. That is, he still behaves in very masculine ways. One writer speculated that such lack of behavioral change was rooted in the male's need to continually assure himself and others that he was still male despite the clothing. This is based on the subconscious fear that to be feminine is to move to second class citizen status.

As I have written before, femininity is not clothing or makeup but rather a way of seeing and interacting with the world. In the last few years there have been a number of books written on the biological differences between males and females. A major focus has been on differences in brain structure, from which it is inferred that males and females process information in very different ways. This, in turn, strongly affects the way they relate to the world. (Ed. Note: See our Book Reviews of one such book, *Brain Sex*, found on pp. 41-42).

If these biological differences are a strong influence on behavior, then one can speculate that it is going to be very difficult for the crossdresser to behave in feminine ways and thus explore femininity. For him to do so, he has to learn new ways of thinking. While this is certainly not impossible, it means overcoming many years of socialization, together with an internal "program" that doesn't process information the way a female brain does. So it is hard for him to understand why women behave the way they do. This makes it difficult for him to explore this alternate culture called "femininity."

On the behavioral side of the discussion, there have been a number of recent authors who have described the different actions of men and women as they relate to each other. Simplistically, men behave individualistically and hierarchically, while women are concerned with the whole situation and interpersonal relationships. (Ed. Note: *You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen, Ph.D., is a good book in this area.)

Thus, there seem to be both biological and sociological differences between the sexes. Perhaps they are so fundamental there will never be a true comprehension by one sex of the other sex.

This situation is neither good nor bad. What I am trying to express is the fact that for a male to explore femininity may be much more difficult than he expected. Maybe this is not needed. Perhaps all that is required is that crossdressers enjoy whatever they do and not try to explain or understand it. (A cautionary note: This is not a license to ignore the effect of crossdressing on your partner.)

*Copyright 1994 by Roger E. Peo, Ph.D.

(Ed. Note: As far as we are aware, this was Dr. Peo's last column. Roger, we will sorely miss you. Your wisdom and compassion have touched so many over the years. May you rest in the full measure of that peace you sought to bring to your brothers and sisters.)

Goodbyes

by Linda Peacock

Into everyone's lives come goodbyes. There is always a sense of loss with goodbyes, even temporary ones. You wave goodbye at the airport or train station to someone going off on a visit, and even though you know that person is coming back, there is a moment of loss, of missing that person. There are the goodbyes that are more permanent ones - when your child leaves the roost to live his or her own life, leaving you behind; the goodbyes caused by moving, when you, or a beloved friend move far away. Although you are friends, nothing will ever be the same, and there is the loss of daily or regular contact, of times shared, the physical presence of friendship.

I am still experiencing this, after my move four months ago, and although I am dealing with it much better now, a voice from the past brings back memories and the sorrow at leaving. Recently, one of my friends, who is also a crossdresser, left a message on the answering machine, and just hearing his voice made me recall the weekly conversations, his sense of humor, his humbleness, his trust in me as his friend, and the emptiness in my life because we are now a distance away. My life is less because I don't have the physical presence of friendship with him anymore.

There are the goodbyes that attack your heart, your soul, your very being - those goodbyes of death, or of losing the love of man or woman you have a romantic relationship with. The loss caused by death is irrevocable - there is not only a loss of the physical presence, there is the loss of the soul, the knowledge that you'll never hear that voice, never touch that face, never feel the warmth of their body. It is a brutal slash of lightning into your inner self, and the pain seems insupportable. Nothing can make it better but time.

So it is with the loss of a spouse through divorce or parting of ways in a romantic partnership. Having experienced such a situation when I was divorced from my first husband, I can well empathize with those who have or are undergoing a parting of ways. First comes the seemingly insurmountable pain and emptiness; then come feelings of betrayal and anger; then

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comes self-examination for the self-doubt you are feeling. What could you have done differently to prevent this? Finally, as time moves on, there is left a memory of the pain, a sense of loss, a sense of failure, a sense of what might have been.

There is a song out by Patty Loveless, in which she sings, "How can I help you to say goodbye?...It's okay to hurt and it's okay to cry. Time will ease your pain. Life's about changing; nothing ever stays the same. Come let me hold you, and I will try. How can I help you to say goodbye?" I find these words profoundly moving, from a personal sense as a woman and human being, and from the perspective of working in the gender community. How often I wished that I had someone who would help me say goodbye when I was getting a divorce! But I had no one but myself, and pain hurts its worst when you are alone. Time eased my pain, that's true, but the memory of that pain sometimes hits me like a physical blow. How I wish I'd had a friend to help me through the pain, the anger, the despair, the sense of failure.

Perhaps the intensity with which I have surged ahead in my work in the gender community is that I don't want to see people who are hurting because of goodbyes, hurt alone. If I can be a friend, someone to listen, to comfort, to be there, then my life is worth living and is fulfilling to me. Personal experience and a human heart gives me the qualifications to do this. It is not something I need a graduate degree in. I don't earn a living doing this, as a professional counselor would. My payment comes in knowing I may be helping someone who would otherwise be alone.

In our community, we see so many goodbyes. You see people say goodbye to themselves, the person they have presented to the world through the years, and in doing so, they say hello to the person who has lived deep inside for that lifetime. For the partner or wife of such a person, the goodbye takes on an unreality, but the reality is that the man or woman they thought they loved really wasn't there, and the emotions they feel must be an acute sense of disbelief, loss of trust, and intense anger at their

partner and at themselves. They witness the destruction of someone they thought existed, and whom they loved, and it must be like experiencing a death, knowing that the person they thought was there wasn't and never will be.

For the wife or partner of a crossdresser, there often is the goodbye of trust. I cannot begin to count the number of women I talk with who have found out recently, after a long time in the relationship, that their husband/partner crossdresses, and the loss of trust is devastating. The defense that the husband/partner didn't tell her because he might lose her, doesn't sit well with these women. What they feel is much like what they'd feel if they found out their husband was having an affair. They cannot accept that he never shared that part of him; often, they feel they have lived a crock of lies, and all that was good is washed away in the flood of pain and betrayal they feel. These women need a friend; they need someone to help them deal with this, and if they choose to say goodbye, they need someone who will say, "How can I help you to say goodbye?...It's okay to hurt, it's okay to cry."

Those of us who work with wives and partners in this community cannot allow our own acceptance to gloss over the needs of our sisters who hurt. We cannot put our own personal agendas in front, we cannot allow our personal tolerance to get in the way of providing the support and friendship these women need. Whether or not the woman's relationship ends, and a permanent goodbye must come to pass, we have a responsibility to be there for her, even at that time of goodbye.

If the relationship continues, we need to be there to listen, to comfort, to encourage, as she works her way through it, saying goodbye to what was, and learning to deal and live with what is. She is getting something she didn't bargain for, didn't expect. If the relationship is well-grounded and strong, if true love exists between man and woman, there is hope, and we cannot abandon them as they struggle to renew the relationship.

S.P.I.C.E. and the Gender Community

by Linda Peacock



It's hard to catch Linda sitting still, but our Roving Reporter managed to get this shot!

Do we force ourselves on them? Never...we simply are "there" if they need us. Is our advice carved in stone, and always right? If we think it is, then it probably isn't good advice, and if we believe that, we shouldn't offer it. We also need to be open to different situations, just as the humans we support are different. The important thing is to be there: To be available to say hello to the new, stronger relationship that rises from the ashes...or to be there to say, "How can I help you to say goodbye?," to be a friend who cares and who stands by, no matter what the outcome is.

Ed. Note: Well said, Linda! We know you wrote this before the death of Dr. Roger Peo, but we find your sentiments particularly appropriate here, and we are sure our readers will agree.

We also thought it appropriate to present here the text of Linda's recent Keynote Speech at the 1994 IFGE Coming Together - Working Together Convention



I'd like to thank IFGE for the opportunity to speak with you. Although I am not a professional speaker, I'd like to talk with you today about the very special needs of the partners of gender gifted people. To begin, I must admit my naivete. For those of you who may not know of me, my credentials include membership in Tri-Ess for 6 years, as well as being a Tri-Ess board member, in the capacity of Director of Wives/Partners Concerns; I am a board member of IFGE; Chairperson of SPICE 1993, and Director of the SPICE board of directors; past president of my local support group for 3 years; chairperson of the first Southern Comfort 1991; on the board of directors of Southern Comfort and AEGIS; a monthly contributor to CrossTalk, and member of 2 other Tri-Ess chapters. With such credentials, you would think I'd have realized far more than I did that the term "partners" goes far beyond the wife/partner of a heterosexual crossdresser.

My awakening happened when I was asked to coordinate the wives/partners programs for Southern Comfort 1993, and in doing so, I enlisted the help of Dr. Sandra Cole and Jan Sandretti, an educator or motivator from Wisconsin. Sandra's all day program for women who are partners of gender-influenced people was a marvelous success, and one which she has repeated at the Holiday En Femme in LA and the T-Party in San Antonio, and here, at the Coming Together this week. The other program was led by Jan, and it was an open discussion forum for partners.

Both Jan and I thought there would only be wives of crossdressers there; instead, we got the shock of our lives to find the room filled to capacity with the most unusually varied group of people. There were the wives and young children of M2F transsexuals; wives and partners of heterosexual crossdressers; wives and partners of transgenderists, heterosexual crossdressers, transgenderists, transsexuals, the male partner of a M2F, the male partner of a F2M, the 23 year old lesbian partner of a hermaphrodite, who was a M2F transsexual - both were part of a tri-committed relationship with another lesbian, and the genetic woman partner of a F2M.

With such a gathering of so many different people, with individual and different needs, the program probably should have failed. Instead of the disaster we were afraid of, the program turned into one of the most powerful experiences of my life. It was a complete marvel in that there was immediate bonding amongst all of the participants. There was opening of hearts and arms, real caring, and the love and the understanding of everyone was phenomenal. It was an awe-inspiring 2-1/2 hours which should have gone on all day. The lives of everyone in that room were changed and made better for having been there.

To me personally, that program served notice that the needs of partners extend far beyond the scope of my prior involvement with wives and partners of crossdressers. I think that we all often become complacent with our own personal needs and involvements. As the wife of a crossdresser, I have worked very hard on both a local and national level with women like me, and that is good. However, I needed that jolt that told me there are others who are not like me, but are partners of gender-gifted men and women, and their needs are very real, too. I think that in a community as varied as the "gender community" is, we would do well to accept each other as we are, acknowledging our humanness, our frailties, our differences. Acceptance of the person doesn't necessarily mean acceptance of individual behaviors, but it says, "You're OK to be you, and I'm OK to be me."

With this knowledge that there are other types of partners, I needed to ask myself if I could help in any way. Did I immediately abandon Tri-Ess, which is a national organization for support of heterosexual crossdressers and their partners and families? Did I forsake SPICE, which is designed to help the wives and partners of heterosexual crossdressers? The answer to this is a resounding "NO." I am a loyal Tri-Ess member and supporter. I believe in its missions and I personally fit well within its structures. It provides needed support to its members.

As for SPICE, it is a conference designed specifically to help women - women who happen to be in a gender-related relationship. We've only had one SPICE, and it was a major success. I remember briefly corresponding with Billie Jean Jones last year, when I asked her to publish publicity on SPICE. She did so, but made the comment that such a conference needs to be opened to all women and partners in the community. I responded by saying we had to start somewhere, and that somewhere is with wives and partners of heterosexual crossdressers. Although we have future plans to perhaps sponsor a conference for partners of transsexuals, or a couples conference, we need to continue what we have begun, for we only touched the lives of a few people.

SPICE needs to grow, to provide more support, education, confirmation of our individual personhood and womanhood. We have so many women in our current focus of wives/partners of heterosexual crossdressers, who have desperate need of what SPICE can give them. Those of us involved in SPICE are learning, too, what is needed, and how best to provide it. It would do no one good to stop what we've started and what we are building, to blindly rush out and try to provide a similar endeavor for other partners. As SPICE grows, as it becomes a more powerful force in the community at large, as we incorporate more professionals on our permanent faculty list, as we reach more and more women, then we can begin to explore how we can help with the needs of other partners.

We have begun in one small way, in that SPICE is sponsoring the Partners program here at the Coming Together, and this includes programs for partners of crossdressers and transsexuals. I committed SPICE to sponsor the partners programs at the California Dreamin' 1995. These are tiny steps, for sure, but we want to get it all right before we expand. SPICE 1994 will be held in Chicago this July, and its faculty includes Sandra Cole, Jan Sandretti, Robert Priore, MD, a gender-influenced physician, known as Dr. Sheila Kirk, Peggy Rudd, Deloris Roys, a counsellor from Atlanta, Niela Miller, Mariette Pathy Allen, Jim and Evelyn Kirkland, Streeter Nelson, Frances Fairfax, Linda Peacock, The Rev. Gary Helms, Lynda McElwee and other wives/partners. From 70 last year, we want

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to grow to 170 this year. The more, the better. By holding it in Chicago, we hope to be able to reach the very large population of women in the Mid-West and Northeast who would benefit from SPICE.

All this is the beginning. As "partners coordinator" for Southern Comfort 1994, I plan to coordinate programs aimed at each different need of each different type of partner. Both JoAnn Roberts and Sandra Cole will be part of these programs. Programs for partners provided at other conventions and conferences need to be continued and strengthened. More partners need to be reached. More publicity in publications needs to be given to the needs of partners. One of the things I find to be admired is Tri-Ess' commitment to the needs of the wives and partners of their members. The publicity and the support to our needs is endless, and their commitment to SPICE is wonderful. We need the commitment of other gender support organizations. Transpitt, in sponsoring the upcoming Be-All, has a strong program for wives and partners - the coordinator for this program is a SPICE wife. IFGE always has programs for partners. In future years, the programs should be defined according to the individual needs of the different partners. The T-Party always has programs for partners and for couples. California Dreamin', this year, has a wives/partners program under the coordination of a SPICE wife. This is where the future begins, but there is so much work to be done.

Before I close, I think it important to tell you where I stand on the games of politics. I personally believe that there is no place whatsoever for politics or personal agendas in the mission to help partners throughout the community. Politics and personal agendas serve to increase the stature of one or a few people; they hurt those who are already hurting and who need the help that we who serve can provide. Those hurting are too often asked to pledge allegiance to one faction or person, and brainwashed to believe that other support groups and programs are no good or not helpful. To me, this is a sin.

Far better for each of us to recognize the contributions of others, encourage the work that they do, offer to join and help in that work. We need to quit the harping, the badmouthing, the vindictiveness, and get on with the job at hand - to help stop the

hurting within our partners. If I choose to work primarily with wives of heterosexual crossdressers, who are you to tell me I'm wrong because I don't include other partners in that particular work? I want to help all that I can, but I am limited in my abilities and the time I have to give to the community. There are others far better qualified to work with wives of transsexuals, such as Lynn Montgomery or Rebecca McGowan. I can feel compassion and a sisterhood to these women; but I feel a closer sisterhood to the other wives and partners of heterosexual crossdressers. And there's nothing wrong with this!

Each of us is gifted, and how we use these gifts to help others should be applauded, not condemned. If we all work together with a sense of mutual respect and compassion, then we can help these partners as they seek some sense of understanding and release from their pain. If we constantly rip each other's efforts apart, then our partners will go on hurting, relationships will founder, and we all will be the losers. The future for partners is in this room and in support groups of all kinds all over this country. If you will think of an ant, trying to move a large piece of food; he can't because it weighs so much more than he does. Yet, if we have 8 ants, they work as a team and can move many hundreds of times their weight. We need to be like the ants - join together and be willing to have a mutual cooperation to help. I hope you'll join together to help us as we move into the future.



**You need to put some
S.P.I.C.E. in your life!**

**Write to:
Linda Peacock
PO Box 24031
Little Rock, AR 72221
501-227-8798**

Chapter Update

By Jane Ellen Fairfax

This chapter update is unique in that (3) chapters, Phi Rho Sigma in Calgary, Alberta, Sigma Epsilon in Atlanta, Georgia, and Tau Lambda of Tallahassee, Florida, wrote their own chapter updates. This writer expresses her gratitude and appreciation to these chapters for their civic-mindedness in sharing their activities with their sisters around the world, and hopes their effort is a harbinger of things to come. If our chapters ever realize what they can do networking and combining their efforts for our common goals, what an organization Tri-Ess will be!

DATELINE: KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA

Once again, the sisters of Phi Epsilon Mu have by their creativity showed why they were the 1993 Tri-Ess Chapter of the Year. Taking a page out of Tri-Ess National's book, they have established a forwarding service and a pen-pal program. Such a program could be a godsend to members who are feeling uncomfortable attending a chapter meeting. Even members of Phi Epsilon Mu not ready to venture out, get access to friendship and support, as well as an outstanding newsletter. That's really giving the members their money's worth! It's service and support in the finest Tri-Ess tradition!

White Shoes

As the seasons roll around, the perennial question recurs: "When are white shoes appropriate?" The ladies of Phi Epsilon Mu culled many helpful hints from the March, 1994 issue of Glamour Magazine. According to the old custom, one wears white shoes only between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The latest wisdom, however, is to use the thermometer rather than the calendar as the main guide. White shoes should be worn when the weather is warm. One should always bear in mind that solid white or bright white can look dated. Sandals or shoes with T-straps or soft textures look cooler and timely. Yet

another choice is to wear navy-and-white spectators or white fabric pumps with colored heels. This adds variety and makes the appearance of the shoe more interesting.

Hosiery

Hosiery is frequently a problem for crossdressers, for whom sizing is often awkward. Having consulted the height and weight charts on the back of hosiery package, one should, if on the borderline, go to the next larger size. To eliminate bagginess, one can stick to styles that contain spandex. As a rule, the more stretchy the hose, the better the fit and the less the likelihood of running.

Nude hose are everywhere in evidence this Spring. In buying "nudes", one should buy the shade that is closest to one's skin tone, (ultrasheer hosiery looks most natural.) A common mistake is to wear hosiery whose color is darker than one's skin color. This immediately draws attention to the hosiery (just what we crossdressers do not want!) and imparts a fake appearance.

Color matching also applies to the color of the dress. Pale tints look fresh for Spring. It is advisable to wear a color slightly lighter than the dress. Stark white or black imparts an undesirable heavy appearance. As a rule, the sheerer the hose, the dressier the look. Demi-sheers and daytime sheers go well with classic work suits. Evening wear demands ultrasheers. The exception to this rule is that nude or very pale hose look best in ultrasheer.

Some crossdressers are attracted to textured and patterned hosiery. This hosiery can add weight to the legs. Fine meshes, vertical ribs and quiet patterns in neutral colors are acceptable. Textured hose look interesting with solid colored dresses or graduations of the same tone. Patterned clothing and elaborate shoes make the overall outfit look too "busy" if patterned or textured hose are worn.

Scotland the Brave!

Julie and Christine, Phi Epsilon Mu Members from Scotland, report that a Scottish bank will allow crossdressers to use two high-security check guarantee cards; one with a photo of them dressed enhomme, the other, enfemme. Said a Royal Bank of Scotland spokesman "If any crossdressing customers are confident enough to go shopping dressed as women it's possible for them to have a second card so they can avoid embarrassment or difficulties when paying by check." Also he advised that crossdressers maintain separate bank accounts enhomme and enfemme. Another small advance in the never-ending progress toward public acceptance!

Points to Ponder

The Phi Epsilon Mu discussion group brings up some interesting issues, as Sandra and Lolita report:

1) "What should a crossdresser do when she sees someone she knows while out in public dressed?" The consensus was that the crossdresser should let the other person make the first move. The crossdresser should avoid approaching an acquaintance unless the acquaintance indicates acceptance. This policy would tend to eliminate most potentially embarrassing encounters.

2) "Are you pleased with your appearance enfemme?" "What, realistically, would you like to do to improve?" There was a heavy emphasis in the discussion group that one should make the best of what she has, regardless of anatomical gender. Most crossdressers agreed that they are not aiming for their ideal woman when creating their femme appearances. They just try to be the best women they can be.

3) "Do women enjoy wearing their clothes as much as crossdressers do?" Although the discussants tended to agree that clothing helped express moods and

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The Femme Mirror feelings, it was felt that crossdressers enjoy their clothes more than do genetic women. Generally, women's clothes are less powerful than men's clothes, which still reflect the "flight or fight" instinct. There was heavy sentiment that the clothes were a crutch to help crossdressers express feminine feelings. While some are able to express their feelings no matter what they are wearing, crossdressers appreciate this "clothing crutch effect." As one sister put it, "If you need a crutch and don't use it, you will really hurt yourself."

4) "If a married crossdresser friend has made a deal with her wife to dress only for meetings and not go out in public, but then asks you to accompany her in public, should she live up to the agreement she made?" The discussants demonstrated marked reluctance to get into the middle of a marriage agreement. Appropriate action would be to remind the married crossdresser of her agreement. If she still wants to venture into the public *enfemme*, the friend would do better to stay at home.

Consulting a Counselor

Some time in their lives, many crossdressers consult a counselor over crossdressing issues. Sandra offers the following hints: One should always feel free to change counselors if one is not comfortable or satisfied with the treatment. The counselor should strike a balance between comfort and guidance. A counselor who advises you that crossdressing can be cured is badly misinformed. The goal is to live as a crossdresser and accept yourself for who you are.

You should avoid selecting a counselor who tells you only what you want to hear. We live in the real world. In this world, crossdressing is still not completely understood or accepted. Not every spouse will be 100% accepting, nor will every business be eager to serve you, but some acceptance is better than none and reality is sometimes good. If you search for a counselor in the yellow pages, it is wise to consult the ad to see whether gender issues are mentioned specialties. You should always make inquiries about the credentials. National organizations or local chapters can sometimes locate talented counselors who specialize in gender issues.

DATELINE: PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Under the able and enthusiastic leadership of Rashel, the Alpha Zeta Chapter is undergoing nothing less than a transformation. As the part of the "chapter make-over", the officers are conducting an outreach program to determine the wishes of the membership with regard to future programs. Rashel and her colleagues are promoting dynamic support of Tri-Ess National and a proliferation of fun events for the chapter membership. The ladies of Alpha Zeta are enthusiastically working up a proposal to host the Holiday *EnFemme* in 1995. If they succeed in their plans, the 1995 Holiday will be unlike any Holiday held before, with a distinct Arizona flavor. There will even be a hayride and a barbecue!

Nowhere is the Alpha Zeta make-over more visible than in the newsletter "The Cactus Flower." There has been a literal explosion of articles, the likes of which one seldom sees in the gender community. So many are the significant contributions that it is hard to select out the very best to publish in the *MIRROR*. Jeannie has written excellent articles on decorum and female-to-male crossdressing during the Civil War. Cindy has compiled an excellent article on "The Bra."

The very prolific Jeannie has also tackled head-on the subject of negative images, a topic near and dear to this writer's heart. How often, even in the crossgender press, do we find articles on crossdressers in criminal situations that have nothing to do with true crossdressing, and embarrass the whole community!

This combination of historical, how-to and community-building articles reflects the enthusiasm Rashel is generating in Arizona. Under her leadership, the wives are becoming increasingly a part of chapter activities. What this writer sees is building, Building, BUILDING going on everywhere in Alpha Zeta! How pleasant is the anticipation of receiving that pink newsletter with the graphic map of Arizona across from the Tri-Ess logo!

DATELINE: ALBANY, NEW YORK

From the ladies of Lambda Chi Lambda Chapter comes a discussion of a relatively new product from Cover Girl which combines a cream and power foundation in a single compact. Apparently the cream and powder combination brings out the best of both make-up base and face powder - all in one preparation. Use of this product enables one to dispense with about two-thirds of the layering normally needed to cover the face. The best news of all - the price is only about \$6.00!

DATELINE: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

While visiting a doctor's office, Janyne read about a model dressed in button-fly jeans, work boots and a Harley Davidson T-shirt who said that she had always worn boys' clothing and just felt more at home in it. This honesty regarding opposite-sex clothing preference is something that has eluded most male crossdressers, who are still affected by society's macho male role model.

According to Janyne "The perception is that for a male to adopt the character of the female, he has rejected his manhood. The fear of losing our manhood or being thought of as having no manhood keeps us from our personhood. Whatever the reasons may be, crossdressing is an aspect of humanness. It is an honest expression of self and takes nothing away from whoever does it. A more honest thought for us might be, 'We don't dress as women, we dress as ourselves.'" Well said, Janyne!

DATELINE: DENVER, COLORADO

From Tasha, President of Delta Chapter, come the following thoughts of wisdom. "When you see someone who holds herself with pride, dignity and confidence, it is appealing, and you find yourself being given a dose just for being around." So, think about that the next time you venture out. Be proud and confident and for heaven's sake, smile! Think of it as giving those you meet a gift (which you often get back) or, as another wise person said, "If you see someone without a smile, give him one of yours. Then you are both richer!"

**DATELINE:
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

The March meeting of Tau Chi Chapter was held at Dante's Restaurant, where the members feasted on Northern Italian cuisine. Dr. Peggy Rudd, the newly elected Facilitator of Tau Chi, is generating a lot of enthusiasm. Coming as guests were two representatives of the Houston Gay Switchboard who will help with outreach for the chapter. A guest, Terri Lynn, brought old MIRRORS from as far back as 1979. Since Tau Chi has several new members, Terri's contribution to the evening gave them a chance to learn about their Tri-Ess heritage. To get to know one another better, Peggy suggested that we go around the room giving the person sitting next to us an "award." Peggy always seems to have the right thing to say to the right person at the right time!

The new enthusiasm is evident in the almost universal participation by the members of the chapter. The April Board Meeting was combined with Boys R Us. After working hard at the meeting, everybody adjourned for a lasagna feast. Among the newly emerging leaders of Tau Chi Chapter are Kim and Vanetta who are now editing the Femme Forum; Jean, who is in charge of Boys R Us; and Gail, who is working with finances. Although Peggy has been Facilitator for only two months, she is already hard at work on a bold new outreach. In Rene F. of GCTC, Houston's open group, and April L. of TATS, the transsexual support group, Peggy has found community-minded leaders who desire harmony and cooperation. This September, the three Houston groups will participate in a unity banquet which will give dynamic meaning to Peggy's dedication of 1994 as "A Year of Love." If this writer knows Peggy, the event will be a celebration inaugurating a new "Era of Community" in Houston.

**DATELINE:
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

Terri M. of Sigma Epsilon makes a very valid point that homophobia hurts us all. She puts forward the following modest proposal: "When explaining the nature of Sigma Epsilon, do express its mission as a support group for heterosexual crossdressers, but also emphasize that the group actively approves of all alternative



Dr. Peggy Rudd on Dignity Cruise I. See p. 55 for the new Dignity Cruise V ad.

lifestyles..." This writer agrees! The fact that we are a focused support group does not mean we have the right to judge others. Every human being has the right to be evaluated on the basis of what she does, not what she is. To condemn our homosexual brothers and sisters is to be prejudiced against them. To be prejudiced is to be wrong!

Recently the ladies of Sigma Epsilon enjoyed an evening at the Fox Theater to attend the national road show production of *La Cage aux Folles*. More than 50 members of Sigma Epsilon attended, some making the trip in style in two white limos arranged by Robin and Melanie. The members of the general public who were in the audience were very cordial, and everyone had a good time. [Ed. Note: Get the details of the big evening on page 26.]

Plans are underway for the Second Annual Sigma Epsilon Spring Cotillion to be held at the Marque Hotel. Sisters from other Tri-Ess chapters around the Southeast will be coming. The highlight of the event will be the Saturday night formal. For the first time there will be a Ms. Southern Cotillion pageant, with judging centering on evening wear and poise. Music will be provided by Edee King, Shelly Blue, Jamie C., Dallas Denny, and others. Before dinner there will be an outdoor champagne-and-cheese reception. This will be a "class" event all the way!

One of the signs of a vital chapter is the availability of both fun social events

and civic activities. As is their custom, the ladies of Sigma Epsilon served as usherettes for a program by the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus. Not only were the ladies able to provide a service for the chorus, but everyone had fun doing it. Terri is looking to establish a ladies' bridge group at Sigma Epsilon. Cynthia S. is compiling all "Dixie Belle" [recently renamed "Southern Belle"] articles written by Linda Peacock with the goal of publishing the collection as a book. Given this type of creativity, it is easy to see why Sigma Epsilon is one of the most vital of our chapters.!

**DATELINE:
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

In March, the sisters of Beta Gamma Chapter enjoyed an evening with helping professional Dr. Walter Bockting, who treated them to an evening of self-affirmation. A notable feature of his presentation was a slide show in which he demonstrated the great variety and diversity of crossdressers of many cultures the world over, while lecturing on the nature of crossgenderism. Truly an evening to remember!

Beta Gamma Chapter continues to excel in outreach. Sofronia Anne's tireless energy in reaching out the loving hand of friendship to closeted sisters is an example that should be followed nationwide. Even more remarkable is the networking Beta Gamma does with other chapters. Their leadership has made friends in such far-away chapters as Sigma Epsilon and Alpha
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Zeta. This sharing of communications was one of the original goals on which the chapter system was founded!

DATELINE:
CHARLOTTE, N. CAROLINA

"The Pink Slip" has continued its series on "Proportions to Minimize." Choosing the most flattering style and staying within the appropriate color palette is very important, but quality, fit and fabric should also be evaluated. The following is a checklist for your dress:

- 1) The collar should lie flat. Facings should lie flat and in many cases be tacked down so they don't flip open when you move around.
- 2) The fit of the shoulder, bust, and armseye should be neither too loose nor too tight. There should be no bagging or billowing. You are looking for relaxed fit.
- 3) Fabric should be light and fluid enough to not add extra bulk. This is especially true in pleated or full styles where stiff fabric can add unwanted pounds.
- 4) Fitted styles should be body skimming instead of body hugging. Check for fit all the way around.
- 5) Long sleeves should end at your wrist bone.
- 6) There should be no pulling or puckering at seams, whether standing or sitting.
- 7) Zippers should be covered and lie flat and straight.
- 8) Closures should not pull open between buttons.
- 9) Fabric should fall smoothly across your back and not cup over the derriere.
- 10) Pleats or vents should lie flat and spread open.
- 11) A slit or kick pleat should make walking and sitting comfortable.
- 12) The hem line should be even and parallel to the floor.
- 13) Check for ample seams and hems, invisible hems, and matching patterns.

DATELINE:
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

April, 1994, sees Chi Chapter reaching the end of an era. Naomi Owen, President of the chapter for the last nine years, has announced her retirement. A member of her beloved Chi Chapter for over 15 years, Naomi was involved in every aspect of chapter operation. When she first joined, a typical meeting consisted of only a dozen

or so crossdressers and a couple of reluctant wives. Naomi threw herself into the work of leadership, putting on events such as several Be-All Conventions, two Holidays EnFemme, and devising many and various programs. Theater outings, boat rides, ice cream socials and parties at Tommy Gunn's Garage made Chi an exciting chapter, almost unique in Tri-Ess. No one could "put on the ritz" like Naomi. Working, sometimes at great self-sacrifice, Naomi saw Chi Chapter grow into a mighty organization whose meeting attendance sometimes topped 100!

But it was not just the numbers that indicate what kind of leader Naomi has been. Her gentle spirit and her self-deprecating, sparkling sense of humor could place even the most timid novice at ease. Naomi has always had a shepherd's heart. Truly she is a leader-servant! Yes, Naomi is stepping down to enjoy a well-deserved rest and work on revitalizing her health. A civic-minded person, she will, however, be there for the leadership that will soon emerge.

Following Mary Ann and Deanna in the presidency, Naomi did not destroy what they built, but continued to enlarge upon their vision. This writer very much hopes that the new leadership continues to follow this wise course. Naomi has always been completely loyal to the Tri-Ess mission and the principles for which it stands, and indeed, is still playing a large part in the evolution of the Tri-Ess vision. Anyone can tear down, but it takes a real leader to build!

DATELINE:
ELYRIA, OHIO

Alpha Omega Chapter seems to be once again a beehive of activity. Gloria, re-elected President, supplies the following wisdom: "Every individual, every chapter, every group, every organization has its right to its place in our community. Working on the common bond should be one strength. The other strength should be accepting the right of our diversity within the community. We are human beings - no two of us are alike - no matter how similar at times we may seem. It is the strength of our common bonds and the strength of our right to diversity that allows us to work together for the betterment of all....Everyone who is or becomes a part of

Alpha Omega gives us our strength to be the best chapter we are capable of being."

"Diversity" can be a source of strength or weakness - depending on how it is handled. Under Gloria's leadership, however, the diversity seems to be promoting energy in all kinds of chapter projects. Charlotte, re-elected Vice-President, is busy compiling an outreach program. Tanya B. has completed a new chapter brochure. Debbie is looking into prospects of having a chapter bowling party this summer. Upcoming events include a "clean out the closet" sale, a lip synch song program by Vicki A., a line dancing lesson, and a joint picnic with the Paradise Club, Cleveland's open group. When the chapter provides diverse fun events like these, you just know the enthusiasm will burgeon and new members will join in droves. Nice work, Gloria and colleagues!

DATELINE:
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

From Morgan of Alpha Rho Chapter comes some timely advice on handbags. We all know the classic stereotype of a purse being a repository for all sorts of things. Even so, a Fibber McGee handbag proclaims one as a cluttering creature. Morgan advises that one should do handbag arithmetic before going out, subtracting unneeded items. The handbag wardrobe should include the following:

1) Daytime purses in textured leather, fabric or one of the new synthetic leather-like materials. Textured leathers tend to wear better than smooth calfskin. Colors should be basic to the wardrobe and should complement shoes.

2) Evening bags may be made of all-year silk, leathers, or synthetic fabric blends. Velvet, beaded, sequined, or patent leather bags are more for special occasions. Generally these materials do not wear well.

3) Casual handbags can, again, include leathers and fabric blends. Also they may be made of blanket material or straw. They may be large when one wants to accommodate a bathing suit and towel. One of the better investments is leather handbags because they hold up better than vinyl. Their quality tends to enrich almost any outfit. When selecting a purse, one should make sure clasps and frames are

sturdy, and that shoulder straps are strong and long enough. One should check the handles carefully for probable endurance.

4) When carrying a handbag, one should place the arm through the handle from the outside, keeping the palm close to the body. The handbag should be balanced and sit close to the hip. The hand position should be graceful, and one should avoid clutching the handbag in a tight grasp. To get the most mileage out of leather handbags and other fine purses, one should scale handbags to one's own size rather than follow the fashion fads.

DATELINE: BUFFALO, NEW YORK

When the Buffalo Belles got together recently at their quilting bee they started talking about opportunities for a fun event. What they hatched was a summer picnic. Sounds like an excellent opportunity for a lot of family fun! The spaghetti dinner was apparently a raging success. Jackie and Yvette outdid themselves on making the spaghetti sauce and Colleen treated the chapter to glorious chocolate chip cookies. For the spaghetti supper the chapter had a special visitor. One couple brought their little daughter. This was the first time a child has ever visited the Buffalo Belles! She was described as a "beautiful pixie." So open, warm and friendly! Like most children, she relates to crossdressers simply as people. Truly, as Wordsworth so wisely said, "The child is the father of the adult."

Tips on Lips

From Victoria Jackson, by way of the Buffalo Belles, come the following tips on lips:

- 1) If your complexion is sallow, bright lip shades with a bluish cast will add a glow to your skin tone. If you prefer a more neutral lip, brownish shades work well. Stay away from true orange shades, which tend to make the skin look more yellow.
- 2) If your complexion is ruddy, peach or brown shades work best.
- 3) If your complexion is very fair, lip color with a bluish tint works well.
- 4) If your teeth are very yellow, avoid bluish tones, which tend to accentuate the yellow color.
- 5) If in doubt, you can always wear a shade that is close to the natural color of

your lips.

6) If your hand is unsteady when applying lip pencil, use the fine edge of a foundation sponge dipped in a bit of foundation to smooth the line. Move the sponge smoothly along the lip line.

7) To define the bow of the lips, line them with a lighter shade of pencil than used to outline the rest.

8) For a pouty look, apply lip color, then add a lighter shade in the center of both lips.

9) If your lips are naturally uneven in tone, cover with foundation first and then proceed with application steps.

10) Use foundation to cover natural pigment if it won't be covered completely.

11) Round the peaks of the bow for the most natural look.

12) To shorten wide lips, stop lip liner inside the natural corners.

13) Never outline beyond the natural ridge of the lips - the result looks clownish.

14) When trying to minimize the lips, line on the inner ridge of the lips. Stopping short of that inner ridge makes the lips too thin and shapeless - the lips look older, and the expression looks angry.

DATELINE: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

(Yes, here's more from Atlanta!)

Sigma Epsilon's monthly meetings are activity filled weekends. The March meeting was a particularly unique blend of CD/SO oriented happenings. One retired Gulf Coast couple arrived on Thursday to do he & she shopping and sightseeing till Friday afternoon. By then the Sigma Epsilon hospitality was humming with the arrival of first time and veteran sisters assembling to gossip and sort themselves into several dinner parties.

About fourteen members went to The Public House as he & she couples, plus two singles. It was their Valentine's Party for partners. The food was excellent and the piano bar entertainment superlative till midnight closing. Other members, including one couple, made a group for mostly enfemme dining at Alfredo's Italian restaurant. Still others went to Crazy Raz' alternate life styles restaurant/ lounge for its good food and floor show, Melonie typically became a part of the show.

All regrouped later at the Marque Hotel's Safari Room, but its midnight closing frustrated attempts to party on toward dawn. This is a new 1994 meeting place for the chapter. Facilities are quite upscale, but bar closing is still geared to last year's unremarkable weekend trade. That was probably fortunate. It produced a good turnout of enthusiastic enfemme and bleary eyed en homme members to balance with other hotel patrons at Saturday morning's complimentary hotel breakfast. It also made for a good turnout at the morning meetings of wives, newcomers, and a therapy group in the hospitality suite and adjacent rooms.

Board member and general membership meetings alternated with afternoon socializing. Then all began donning best party dresses and primping for the big evening. A buffet dinner in the hotel's Georgian Room began at 5pm, allowing ample time for car pools and two hired limousines to transport over fifty of our members, plus visitors from central Florida, the Carolinas, and west Tennessee, to Atlanta's historic downtown Fox Theater for its production of La Cage. For this event our wives' coordinator (working toward her counseling PhD) brought her husband. Cleo, a favorite Atlanta GF "coming out" facilitator (shopping, makeovers, photos, contacts) was there. Seating was mostly in two center lower loge sections that president Lauren had been coordinating for months. Sharon, our GF artist and unofficial art critic, loved the production.

Even the intermission was nice. Long lobby lines for liquid refreshment were made interesting by back bar mirrors reflecting en femme images. Lauren, who had briefed us to use the Men's Room and pass ourselves as members of the cast, arranged the opening of a top floor rest room and lounge for our intermission use. After the final curtain, all remained for a group photo on the main lobby staircase.

This had everyone in a gala mood for rendezvous back at the hotel's Safari Room Lounge, which extended closing till 3am. Two wedding parties shared the lounge. Cautious outreach culminated successfully when one bride asked a dozen of our "ladies" to pose with her for a wedding album photo, and a smartly uniformed groomsman from the other party disappeared temporarily to return wearing a little black party dress borrowed from his girl friend.

The chapter's March meeting was unique in a different way. Members were guests of a Buckhead boutique, Elegant Trash, at a Saturday afternoon Wine & Cheese party given for the group. The boutique's GF entrepreneurs had visited our January meeting.

**DATELINE:
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA**

Tallahassee Lassies began meeting quarterly, as a satellite chapter of Sigma Epsilon (Alanta), in June of 1993. In 1994 they began bi-monthly meetings and were chartered as a new Tri-Ess Tau Lambda Chapter (TLC) before their February gathering of a dozen members the home of a west Tallahassee couple.

A dozen members, including CDs from Lake City, Ft. Walton, and Pensacola, participated in the pot luck dinner and a program which included a video titled WIGS, wig purchasing tips from Stella (she owns over 60), and a wig comb-out/styling demonstration by Bobbie. Petra was spokesperson at the short business discussion which set a small meeting fee to reimburse our hostesses, planned future meetings/ activities, and decided not to elect leaders or set dues until further notice.

**DATELINE: CALGARY,
ALBERTA, CANADA**

(This comes from Audrey, Secretary-Treasurer of Phi Sigma Chapter.)

Phi Sigma Chapter was delighted to be honoured with a visit by Carol Beecroft at their January meeting. With the help of her new charts, Carol gave us a new insight into the very meaningful activities of the National organization and the great value of individual membership in that organization.

This dinner meeting, held at a local hotel, was well attended and, with a big round of applause, all present showed their appreciation for Carol taking the time to make the long trip from Tulare to speak to us.

At the meeting, Nicole was elected our new President, and she now tells us she has arranged for us to receive the chartering documents at an early date.
Spring 1994

Whoa Man (W oman)

A Poem by Tasha, Delta Chapter

Window shopping at the mall, a vision of fashion, sleek and tall,
In every way a living doll. You might say she's got it all, because...

(chorus) That woman is a "good ol' boy."
Smooth, soft curves and a whole lot more
Out from behind the closet door.
That woman is a "good ol' boy."

She's had these feelings most of her life, along with the guilt and the strife.
She has something not shared by her brother,
A craving she must keep under cover.
She does what she can and keeps on hoping for that day when she can be open.

(chorus) A desire to dress in women's clothes, where it comes from.....who knows?
Money spent on therapy (in repose) could have bought a brand new nose.
Others may look at it in dismay. One thing's for sure, it's here to stay.

(chorus) It can be a blessing in disguise, hidden in panties cut high-thigh.
More kindness and understanding than the normal man.
There should be a place for her in this land, but not until people understand.

(chorus) Not a homosexual, though they have their rights, too.
She just wants to wear high heeled shoes.
But that would be a shock to our society, so at all costs avoid impropriety.
It's so much more than makeup and hair. Proper conduct is in her care,
Avoiding those moments they can condemn. It's not easy being a "her",
And a "him".

(chorus) It's not her wish to impose the wearing of garters and silky hose.
Those not accepting, she will not bother.
But there is that need to share with others.
Acceptance of self is at the core, for "knowing" friends and whole lot more.
And there are benefits, every significant other knows....
You can always borrow her clothes!

(chorus) It's a practice that's been here throughout our past.
Maybe acceptance will come at last.
Is it so bad to dress "en-femme"? To have a broader outlook than a plain "him"?
The feminine side to express, without fear of police arrest.
Maybe someday it will be understood.
Dressing is an expression. Not bad. Not good.

You know — That woman is a good ol boy
smooth, soft curves and a whole lot more
out from behind that closet door.
Being a sometime woman is a good, Old Boy.

Sigma Epsilon Does "La Cage"

by Linda Peacock

Fifty-six members of SIGMA EPSILON, two members of KAPPA BETA, and two ladies from CENTRAL FLORIDA SISTERS attended a performance of "LA CAGE AUX FOLLES" at the FOX THEATRE, in Atlanta, Georgia on February 4th. Planning since last September, President Lauren H. was able to obtain tickets to the Road Company performance of the hit Broadway musical. Starring Lee Roy Reams as "Albin" and Walter Charles as "Georges," both of whom are well known and respected Broadway performers and critically acclaimed actors, the presentation was a wonderful blend of song, dance and laughter, delivered with a sense of love and sentimentality which brought our emotions out full force as their love for each other surfaced amongst the prime players.

Music, acting, and the superb setting of the FOX THEATRE allowed the ladies of SIGMA EPSILON to attend in full force and dress. A specially arranged buffet dinner began the evening at 5:30 PM, followed by the trip to the downtown theatre, which is best known for the premier

of "Gone With The Wind," back in the 1930's. Robin, who always goes First Class, arranged for two limousines, one of which transported Robin and friends, Jackie H. and Jamie Lee, and the other, Linda Peacock and spouse, Jacque Nowling. It was a very impressive arrival and departure for all concerned.

The CDs were an obvious highlight of the evening for those from the outside world who also had tickets. Robin was heard calling out to a pair of couples, seated right smack in the middle of CDs everywhere, "How really lucky you are, being surrounded by the crossdressers; we're where the fun is!" Our group went all out to be stylish, from Pamela, dressed in gold sequins from hair to foot, Linda Peacock in a full length real fur coat, Melanie S. in the full-length, velvet, off-the-shoulders evening gown she found at the Holiday En Femme in November, and Robin in her normal sequins.

The best part of the entire evening was that the audience really loved having us there. We were asked to pose for photos by

many people, all of whom wanted to know who we were and why we were there. People came up and offered to take photos of us with our own cameras. People followed us out after the performance, still asking questions, really interested. Robin was right! "We're where the fun is!" It was the best night I can remember in six years, and we all had a blast. It was a chance to tell the world who we are, and enjoy a wonderful show with a profound message of love, and it was done without one single moment of confrontation.

Wait a minute, I lie. There was one moment which was confrontational, and I've got to share it. While we awaited the return of our limos, a drunk staggered down the sidewalk, and paused right in front of the theatre. Robin, the blond bombshell, was standing at the door of her limo (which arrived first) with a glass of champagne, in all her sequined glory, and the drunk stopped dead in total shock. Standing there a moment or two, he advanced with bottle outheld, to declare in a slurred and awed voice, "My God, it's Marilyn; she's come back to life!"



On the grand staircase of the historic Fox Theater.

Hey, Good Lookin'! Yes, that's you! Welcome to our "How-to" Section. This issue we're trying to assemble most of the good stuff in one place. You'll also want to check out the Chapter News Update for some of the best tips gleaned from Chapter newsletters around the country. Enjoy!

Rebecca's Sometimes Helpful Hints Column

As the old expression goes, "It's amazing how fast time goes by, when you're having fun". This is my fifth column for the "Mirror", which means that it has been over a year since I started writing this drivel. At the end of each of my columns, I have included my address for those that wished to send comments on my writings. I originally thought that my mailbox would be filled with letters of praise and possibly cash donations. I also thought that if one of the *Femme Mirrors* got into the right hands, a Pulitzer might even be forthcoming. As it worked out, I have received a handful of letters and no cash. A word even close to "Praise" was not mentioned in any of these letters and I haven't heard from the "Pulitzer" committee. Of course, I also just learned that they don't have a drivel category.

A couple of that handful of letters that I have received, were from seriously disturbed people that should seek professional help. These letters went on and on rebutting almost everything that I have written in the past year. They picked apart almost everything I said. In other words, they disagreed with me. The nerve of these people. It's not like this job pays anything. Come on folks, lighten up.

Now, with that in mind, let's move into the topic for this column. Since it's the Spring issue, I want to discuss color coordination. There are many great books on this subject that I'm sure you have all read, that deal with color coordination of clothing and accessories. For me to elaborate on this subject would probably be redundant. What I really want to discuss are some basics, that for some reason, crossdressers have a hard time with. You won't find these basics in the above mentioned books or magazines, mainly



Rebecca Petersen

because these publications are devoted to women, who as we all know, are much smarter than we.

Certain colors have more attraction to crossdressers than other colors. It would appear that black and red are the choices of a high percentage of CD's, especially when it comes to undergarments. Black bras are admired by most CD's, much like the way Lorena Bobbitt admires Ginsu knives. Almost all CD's have at least one, and in some cases, hundreds of black bras. There is really not a problem with this, unless you insist on wearing said black bra under a white or light colored blouse or sweater. Yes, it may be exciting gang, but it sure looks tacky.

Color and style of undergarments are as important as the outer garments you wear. Nothing can spoil a look, quicker than something showing that's not supposed

to be showing. Learn to keep your colors harmonious with one another.

Another favorite of most CD's, is black stockings. I've seen CD's wear black stockings with everything, including white skirts and even white pants. Once at a CD gathering, during the height of summer, I observed a CD wearing a pink top and pink short shorts, with black pantyhose and pink sandals. If you took away the black pantyhose, it was a nice outfit.

Stockings and shoes must also go together. There's a rule that should always be observed. That rule is, "Never wear stockings darker than your shoes."

I'm sure you are saying to yourself, "This is an advice column, so where's the advice?" In respect to color coordination, I honestly believe this is a learned situation. I don't feel that something like color coordination is set into your DNA at birth, for either males or females. Your best teachers are the women around you. Start being conscious of what women are wearing, rather than how great their looks or bodies are. Clothing catalogs are another good source.

Be observant and, as always, remember what it is you are emulating and do it with style and class. A woman is the most beautiful thing on the face of the earth, except of course for a Lamborghini.

Any comments or cash may be sent to:
Rebecca Petersen
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So. Lake Tahoe, Ca. 96151

Shopping With Maureen

This is about saving money and still looking good. Out of necessity I live and breathe bargains at every possible turn. By now I correspond with well over 20 sisters, many of whom are downright amazed when I tell them about the latest findings. They ask, "Maureen, how do you do it?" I'd like to share some of the answers with all of you. Even you ladies for whom money's no problem may well benefit. And here's one extremely important point to bear in mind. Even if money were no problem for any of us, we must respect genetic women enough to remember that most of them cannot dress as we wish to. If you can afford that \$119 outfit, fine. But a cursory glance at most life situations will remind you that not a lot of genetic women are dressed like that, because in many instances, they simply haven't got the money or means. And while I'm at it, please to remember that indeed, there are even some genetic women who don't even wear dresses to begin with! I knew one who didn't wear a dress for literally years!... at least 5 years!

The other point is one you've heard before, but I want to see it properly hammered into the minds of all crossdressers. If you love and respect your genetic woman, you'll make visible efforts not to spend lots of money just for the sake of spending it. That's foolish; common sense should tell you that. And ladies, Ronald Reagan only made it seem like greed is acceptable. It is not!!! It's extremely harmful, and as long as it takes, I'll continue to loudly urge you ladies against it.

Okay, now I'm sure that of all 1300+ of you reading this, more of you than not need to watch your money to some extent. Surely I am among the poorest of us Tri-Ess sisters, but I'm delighted to give the rest of you some advice for free. If some of you shopped much as I do, you'd be amazed at the money you'd save.

First, patience is critical. That alone has saved me untold money. Like the rest of you, I constantly see items I would dearly love to have. The majority of times, though, you'll need to just say no. In many instances, however, "no" isn't final, but

rather, it's another way of saying "Perhaps later on." It often works that way.

Next, realize that sales go on frequently. Try to get a sense of the difference between sales and giveaway bargains. Let's take the Gloria Vanderbilt pantyhose I enjoy so much, because it's such delightful hose for BBWs. Each package is marked at \$4 now. Okay, one can get it on sale for 12 pair for \$20 in some stores I know of. That comes to \$1.67 per pair. Wonderful, you say; more than half off! That's correct. However ... I was surprised a few weeks ago at our local Lane Bryant. It was an accident, so to speak, as I had not planned on buying anything for Maureen. Anyway, the surprise was that for that one day only, all the pantyhose were just \$1 per pair! It was the first time in over two years that Lane Bryant had offered such a deal. The only "catch" was a limit of 12 pair! I promptly got mine, of course.

There are other specific instances I could cite of great hosiery "giveaways" I have acquired. However, I have made my point above ... I hope. Patience really paid off!

Since so many CDs are plus size women, it's especially important to be as sure of sizes as possible. The reason it's so tricky is because one manufacturer's particular size doesn't always match that of another. And surely you ladies know that it's better to get something which fits a bit loosely, rather than too tight. Now, much as I'd love to, I can't shop en femme, so I don't try clothes on at the time. Here's basically how I got familiar with my own size needs.

When I "officially" became Maureen in late 1985, my income was even shakier than it is now. With the exception of shoes, I bought almost everything for Maureen from places such as Goodwill. If you need to "experiment" with your size, I recommend trying that, since the name of the game here is holding down costs. And if you do shop in a regular store, you can usually return items which won't fit properly. Believe me, ladies, there have been many instances in which Maureen would spot something she'd dearly love to

have, and the price was a great bargain. However, she (reluctantly) passed it up because it was at least questionable as to whether it would fit or not.

Now, let's assume you have all sizes mastered and you already feel you pretty much know a "don't-pass-it-up" when you see it. And let's say you've been at this for some time. Now comes my next point. Be perfectly honest with yourself. You see that extremely low price tag and the first thought is, I must buy that!! I'd be crazy not to!! Well, not necessarily. Let me cite an excellent case here, something which happened with me a few months ago.

I was in a Wal-Mart and there was summer merchandise on super clearances. I saw an orange tank dress in my size, which is presently 22. The price was \$1. Yes. Just 100 cents! I nearly grabbed it off the rack, but stopped myself and wound up not purchasing the dress. Did Maureen suddenly decide she's not interested in crossdressing anymore? Maybe she took leave of her senses? No, I thought a second and at least a third time, too. I asked myself, Maureen, if you buy this, will you enjoy it enough to wear it and not give it a life sentence to solitary in your closet? Then I told myself no, and I even told myself why. Basically, my body shape isn't something I feel such a dress would flatter, and I sure don't have the breasts for such a dress. Plus, since I personally insist on never being bare-legged as Maureen, it also occurred to me that perhaps wearing nylons with this dress might seem a touch suspicious to some. As I walked away with no regrets. I told myself, Maureen, use that dollar toward something else you're truly going to love! Anything else, even if it has nothing to do with being a lady. Or if it does go toward something for Maureen, let it do just that. Get a pair of pantyhose for \$1, or spend it toward a \$4 skirt you'll find at a ridiculous clearance sale somewhere, like Sears, Penney's or a local plus-size chain store.

When you see sales advertised, try to notice if it's an ongoing sale, or a limited time sale. If the time appears indefinite, you are probably best advised to wait for a spell. As I write this now, for example,

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there are sales on Christmas items. In our local Wal-Mart stores, there are liquid gold items which are starting to be marked down now. There's only one such item I could want yet; a jacket. Anyway, I know that in a few weeks, the prices will be slashed to ridiculous levels. I've seen such skirts have a start at \$20 and in the end, be as little as \$3!

By waiting, especially for weeks, you are gambling, yes. Someone may buy the item you want; your size may run out. But ladies, it's not the end of the world if it happens. A great disappointment, at most, unless perhaps you want the item for a particular event. Again, this is where you need to be perfectly honest and candid with yourself. However, in the majority of cases, my waiting paid off in the form of savings. I'll buy most anything I want at 85% or more off any day.

As crossdressers, most of us get a kick out of the clothing itself. Getting and wearing it provides indescribable joyous feelings for us. Am I saying that you must always shop this particular way; never get anything for more than a "steal" price? No. However, a continuous reality check of your money is only a smart idea. From personal experience, I can tell you of one circumstance where I sometimes shop other than at very rock bottom. In the past few years, I've managed to be on vacation a few times. I might add that each vacation takes me months (!) to plan; otherwise I could never take one. At any rate, when away from home, I'll stop and shop around for Maureen in stores I'm familiar with somehow; recognition of the name, for instance. Okay, and I see something which is an item I truly want, and it's on a pretty good sale. Well, chances are I'll buy it. Either I'll never be there again, or it's a safe bet I won't return for a long time.

But again, look for those cycles of sales. Don't refuse a great bargain solely because it's out of season. Hey, that season will return! Think of the purchase as a smart investment of both time and money. That's how I did it with my liquid gold items. At this particular time, it's a good idea to wear them, and I have them!

Also, keep your eyes out for rebates and coupons which you can use on items such as nylons, bras and panties. Thanks to a coupon offer, I recently got a white bra

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from Just My Size for \$3. It came (the coupon) in a package of Just My Size pantyhose which I had bought at only \$1 per pair; they are normally priced at over \$2.

Okay, sister, let's assume for a minute (wish I could really do it!) that Maureen passes, and so do you. We're both very presentable and feel so good inside because we're about to shop together. Sister, I love your two-piece dress with attached necklace; those suntan pantyhose and black skimmers go so nicely with it! Maureen is dressed much the same, but she has on black pantyhose with black crinkled-look flats. Join me at the mirror for a moment. Sister, we are two lovely ladies, and convincing enough, too. Our appearance isn't anything you wouldn't unreasonably expect to see in a mall. Okay, sweetheart, out the door; let's shop. The door is opened and a package awaits. We bring it in and open it. Ah, that bra you sent in the coupon for, dear sister! It was just \$3.

We get into the car and drive toward the mall. On our way is a shoe store we like and sale signs are in clear view. Let's stop for a minute. You're size 11, right? Right. We look around. Now, what have you found? Oh, those red pumps you've wanted! and at just \$5! Great! We pay and get back to the car. We're near the mall now, but Maureen turns into the lot of a discount department store. I think they have pantyhose in our size on sale. We go in; they do! There are 2-packs for \$2. You need some black pantyhose, too? Great, and I can always use another pair. Come to think of it, I can use a couple of other shades, too. So we buy a few packs, as it comes to just \$1 per pair. Then we go to the mall.

Inside, we go into Sears. They have a rack of dresses which has a "Clearance" sign on top. We look through them and keep glancing at the sign, because imposed on it is a bonus sign, too. Different color dots stand for a certain additional discount. As we look, my dear sister picks out a dress I already know she loves, but doesn't have yet. It's marked down to \$20. Hey, the green dot means a additional 40% off! That makes it but \$12. You say that size is right; little chance it won't fit? I know you love it. Great, buy it! By all means. I know I'll be seeing a lot of you in that dress!

We then go into Lane Bryant. How lucky can you get? For just today, all panties are on sale for \$1 a pair! Wow! These normally go up to \$12 each! Again, we each buy some; besides, both spot some pretty panties we don't already have. After this, we find ourselves in another shoe store of the same chain where we stopped. Let's go in, just for fun. As we look, dear sister, you suddenly flush with excitement. No wonder! Those are very pretty summer shoes on clearance, for just \$1! You really will wear those; you love them that very much? Yes, you do. Silly Maureen! She forgot how much you love open-toe shoes and love to have your toenails polished, showing brightly through the sheer nylons you wear with them. We do more looking around and shop not only for clothes, but other items we need, and we get some more good prices.

So later on, at home, dear sister, we figure it out. We managed to essentially get you a whole outfit, Let's take the price of each item:

bra	\$3.00
shoes	\$5.00
pantyhose	\$1.00
dress	\$12.00
panties	\$1.00

To coin a phrase, you're covered for \$22 in all. And since our money situation is reasonable right now, we also bought ourselves a couple other little treats, such as a pair of earrings, on sale for just \$1.50. My sister has them on now and just loves them!

Obviously, it's not likely this would all occur in one day. However, I'm fortunate enough to live in an area of 100,000 population, which is why there are two shopping malls here, along with a few other places which carry items Maureen would enjoy.

So, sisters, you've been given all this advice at no charge. The best way to profit from it is to take it to heart. In short, be patient, honest and sensible. That's the very quickest way I can explain how Maureen has what she does have.

Enjoy. Save a bundle of money. And to those for whom money's not a major problem ... share!! The rewards you get from sharing with less fortunate sisters are immeasurable!

T.E.S.T. (Tri-Ess-Shoe-Talk)

by Jaclynn Andmee NJ-3793-L

"Happy, healthy feet, carry a happy healthy person." I know I've ended all my articles with this saying, but I wanted to start it off with this one for various reasons. If you take care of your shoes, they will take care of your feet, and we all know our feet carry us around. Now remember, whatever I talk about concerning shoe care pertains to both male and female shoes.

Now let's start talking.....

1. Braces: What with all of us being humans, some of our sisters have to wear a brace on one or both legs. This does not mean you cannot wear feminine shoes when you dress. I know braces are very expensive, but if you have a new one or pair made up, use the old set for your feminine shoes. I've worked on both male and female shoes that have a brace attached to them, so it can be done. Just make sure the feminine shoes you buy have a larger heel to give the support on either leg the brace is on. Also, look for support first, then style. You can and will look very lady like even with a brace.

2. Wheelchair: Even our sisters who are confined to wheelchairs can wear feminine style shoes. I know high heels are out, because your foot has to sit flat on the stirrups of the chair. But, you can buy very stylish flats or slippers and still look very ladylike.

3. Shortness of one leg: Just as you bring your masculine shoes in to be built up, you can do the same with your feminine shoes. If you add 1/8, 1/4, 3/8, etc., to your male shoes, you must have the same done to your feminine shoes. First of all, stay away from high heels. You can go with a wedge heel or flats. Again, they do come in very nice styles; and when worn will help both in giving you the support plus the lady like look.

Needless to say, we are not all perfect. No one is because we are humans, and some have more problems than others. Yet, we seem to work around them or compensate for them. I have a lot of respect for my customers who come into my shop with their orthopedic needs. I had

one grandmother bring her granddaughter. She needed two inches added to one shoe because one leg was shorter. Once the job was done, you should have seen the smile on her face. It was great, because now she could be a whole person and walk around standing straight, not hunched over like a crippled person.

So, to all my sisters who have orthopedic problems, you can, I'll say it again, you can get around or walk around with dignity as a beautiful feminine lady. Good luck to all my sisters. Take pride in who you are!

Enjoy!



Maureen dresses smartly for only \$16.00.



Jaclynn Andmee

Decorum

By Jeannie

I heard an interesting comment that Montel Williams made on his recent show featuring crossdressers. A member of the audience said that, if we were going to dress like ladies, she felt that we should at least act like them. Mr. Williams found that concept amusing, asking if there was a decorum crossdressers were supposed to follow. The reason that I found it so amusing is I fully agree with the woman in the audience. When I'm out in public as Jeannie, I feel I am representing all of you, so I at least try to convey a good image. I spend a lot of time hiding the beard, getting the makeup right, and coordinating the outfit I'm going to wear so it is more or less appropriate for the occasion.

From talking to others, particularly people involved in the retail clothing trade, that is not always true with other crossdressers. I was in a Ross store a while back, and three people came in that bothered me. One appeared to be a young woman, the other two appeared to be men half dressed as women and all three were acting very outrageously. While I firmly believe that anyone should be able to dress however they want as long as it is decent, these people's behavior offended me because it is that kind of behavior that gets noticed. It is human nature to create stereotypes. Drag queens are already the stereotype most of the public have of us, and the three young people I saw in Ross only reinforced that stereotype.

I have heard tales of crossdressers going into retail stores and trying on clothes, parading around in them for extended periods of time, then leaving without ever buying anything. I've heard of clothes being "soiled" and torn. I was in The Short Skirt not too long ago when they found a pair of shoes that had been returned to the box with a broken heel. While I have been welcomed everywhere I have shopped, (or, at least my money was welcomed), I've heard of one store that won't allow us to hold a meeting there because they are afraid of what might happen to their merchandise. This same store welcomes me to shop there, but has declined to advertise in *The Cactus Flower*.

While I strongly believe few, if any, of us in Alpha-Zeta are guilty of fostering a negative image to the public, perhaps a few tips are in order.

1. I believe in having fun as much as the next person, but as stated earlier, if we are going to dress like ladies, then let's act like ladies. Just as women in the workplace have to work harder than men in order to get equal treatment, we have to behave better than real women in order to be treated equally. Loud, boisterous activity will not create a good image.

2. I love fancy clothes, but I've more or less learned to dress appropriately to the occasion. I don't even wear my 5" heels to the Symphony. I dress fully and make sure the beard is hidden, the makeup is on right, my underwear isn't showing, etc. If you aren't sure what is appropriate, scout ahead to see what real women are wearing at the time you will be where you are going to go. One good thing about Alpha-Zeta meetings is anything decent is acceptable (like the 5" heels I wore at the Christmas party).

3. Watch how you sit, especially if wearing a short skirt. While real women will put their feet up on theater seat backs, sit with their legs apart, etc., we are under closer scrutiny and such behavior is much more likely to be noticed unfavorably. Either keep your legs together or cross them without showing what color underwear you have on while crossing them. Even with a long skirt sitting with the knees spread apart looks tacky.

4. Examine your table manners. I have eaten with many crossdressers who are very passable, then sit at the dinner table and chow down like a man, elbows on the table, using a two handed, shoveling technique complete with a boarding house reach and chewing with their mouths open. Avoid using your hands to put food in your mouth. Cut meat like chicken from the bones if possible. Avoid messy foods like hamburgers, shellfish, corn on the cob, etc., it's murder on the makeup. Keep your elbows off the table and your left hand in your lap while it isn't being used. Use your napkin in your lap. Take small bites. Chew

thoroughly and swallow before taking another bite. If you are in a restaurant, tip generously. And for heaven's sake, try not to belch!

5. While it is probably true most stores that welcome (or, at least, tolerate) us do so because we are spending money there, their attitude would change in a hurry if we were to do anything to drive away customers. After all, they are there to make a living. Show consideration for the stores and their customers. Return merchandise to where you found it and in the same conditions you found it. If you find merchandise knocked on the floor or put out of place, restore it to its proper place. Don't try on that darling size 16 dress if you have a size 18 body unless you are prepared to pay for it if you rip it. For that matter, don't try anything on unless you are serious about buying it. Take whatever precautions you need to avoid accidentally soiling a garment.

6. Getting "read" can be traumatic, depending on how you feel about it. I get read on a regular basis. I've been read by a baboon at the zoo and even get read occasionally while en homme! The thing to remember is, once you are read, you can still leave a good impression. Don't respond with one finger salutes or sarcastic remarks. Ignoring the "reader" is usually the best way to handle it. Sometimes, a smile is appropriate, as long as it won't be taken offensively. In general, show a good sense of humor. After all, how can the public feel good about us if we don't feel good about ourselves?

7. Then there's the old restroom issue. While I believe it is appropriate to use the restroom we are dressed for, not everyone shares that view. I've had women tell me (while I'm en homme, usually not knowing I'm a crossdresser) that they don't appreciate men using their restrooms no matter how they are dressed. I know I wouldn't appreciate a woman waltzing into a men's room, no matter how she was dressed. We have to use a little discretion here, ladies. If you really pass well you may use the women's room. Just do your business with the stall door closed, wash

The Bra – A History by Cindy

Condensed from "Bras, a Private View" by Mary Hawthorne.

In 1935, The Warner Brothers company introduced cup sizes in bras. They seemed to be keen observers of the obvious when they stumbled onto the fact that women were different shapes and sizes. Warner Brothers introduced the "alphabet bra" in cup sizes A, B, C, & D. This was a bit short sighted because, later, they introduced AA and DD. Today they are available in even larger cup sizes. The British were a bit slower to adopt this system and, instead, preferred the nomenclature Junior, Medium, Full and "Full with Wide Waist".

WWII caused a more austere look in underthings. Utilitarian was the way to go in order to support the war effort. Fancy lace was dropped in favor of functional design (perhaps the lace was needed for the "Klingers" in the services). Even after the war ended, many women continued to make their intimates from strips of old nylon or silk parachutes. The magazine *Stitchcraft* printed in a 1945 issue, a pattern for a crochet bra. It was reported to be quite comfortable and agreeable to wear aside from the faint trellis patterns left upon removal.

The late 40's and 50's saw the bra again gaining in popularity. Lana Turner became known as the "Sweater Girl" with her cone shaped breasts becoming the most pinned up projectiles in the business. Jane Russell gained some notoriety by having her outstanding assets wrapped in a special garment designed by none other than that famous recluse Howard Hughes.

Decorum (Continued)

your hands, then get out. (Don't forget to sit!) I don't pass that well, so I plan my rest stops instead of waiting til the last minute. When necessary, I use small restrooms with a lockable door. That way both the public's and my privacy is ensured. Whenever possible, get permission first. A good way to phrase it is to ask, "Where is a restroom I can use?"

In the early 50's, Maidenform began to market a successful line. Perhaps those more mature ladies among us will remember those lines. "I dreamed I went ... (you fill in the words from your favorite ad here) ... in my Maidenform bra". I still remember seeing those ads in my mother's copy of *Redbook* and other women's magazines of the time.

The "Merry Widow" was produced to coincide with the 1952 film of the same name, starring Lana Turner and the original "Merry Widow" foundation worn by Miss Turner was a full length corselette. This was cut with attractive panels of black and white lace, incorporating slim panels of black elastic yarn net. A heavy duty zip was inserted behind a velvet backed, hook and eye flange and the whole garment was lined with nylon voile. Nine long spiral wires were cased in black satin. It was a terrific garment.

Lana Turner is reputed to have said, "I'm telling you - the 'Merry Widow' was designed by a man. A woman would never do that to another woman."

To this day, "Merry Widow" is the generic for a corselette bra in the United States.

For those of us who are not so well endowed, there have been many attempts to enhance the figure. Back in 1799, a "Bosom Friend" was available. It included a quilted pad that tied around the bosom and it had a complete molded front made of wax. This obviously was not designed with the hot Phoenix summers in mind. Many other bust improvers of several designs were contrived over the years, such as the "Lemon Bosoms" in 1847, so named because it appeared to look like to lemons cut in half lengthwise. In 1905 the Neene Bust Improver was made from cup shaped perforated metal discs weighing

only "3/4 oz. the pair". From the looks of them, they could have doubled as tea strainers.

In 1947, Frederick Mellinger of the famed Frederick's of Hollywood began marketing the new look. His firm was dedicated to fixing the flat and falling bosom. He introduced a foam rubber false and also designed an inflatable bra. From all accounts, the inflatables were not reliable, being apt to spring a leak, whistle air, or according to rumors, explode at high altitudes.

Today of course we have a much more sophisticated selection available to us. Bird seed, Jello, water, and various other kinds of fillers have been used to fill in those areas which are devoid of shape. The best still seems to be the mastectomy prosthesis if you can afford it.

As a closing note, Madonna should be mentioned. She has variously been described as a Barbie doll come to life, a woman who has stepped straight out of a comic strip. Her famous "cone" bra was designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier. When she wore this bra on her "Blonde Ambition" tour in 1990, her image and her bra were firmly etched into the mind of the public. The "bullet bra" was actually a design concept of the corsetiers, Rigby and Peller. It was based on an antique breastplate worn by Italian soldiers, intimidating and protective at the same time.

It has been said that every fashion starts showing off the bosom, it heralds some catastrophic event or change in society. The onset of war, recession or political upheaval seems to bring out the breast in women.

Given the present political and economic situation, it seems that the bra manufacturers better start getting geared up for some really great sales years.

(Ed. Note: Both "Decorum" and "The Bra" are reprinted from *The Cactus Flower*, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter, Phoenix, Arizona.)

The Wonderbra*

"I've got a couple of those Gossard Wonderbras," said Kate Moss in an interview in the January Vanity Fair. "They are so brilliant, I swear, even I get cleavage with them." Emily Prager's curiosity was immediately piqued. She figured if it gave Kate Moss cleavage, it just might work for her. So she immediately phoned Harrods in London for more information.

"Of course we have the Wonderbra, madam," a silky English voice told her, "Just a moment please." Then another English voice got on. In a stern and headmistressy manner she was told, "Madam, I'm terribly sorry, but the Wonderbra is in litigation at this time, and by law, we cannot sell it. You may, however, ring the company. Perhaps they might help you."

After a bit of research, she found that Courtland's Textiles had manufactured and sold the bra for 30 years through its Gossard subsidiary under a licensing agreement with Canadelle, now a part of Sara Lee Corporation.

Further research led her to the Playtex factory in Port Glasgow where she talked to Brian Duffy, the company's vice

president. "The one and only Wonderbra," he said, rolling his r's like Bobbie Burns, "is a feat of engineering, a phenomenon about to sweep the world." Playtex, he confirmed, had recovered the license and would be shipping Playtex Wonderbras at the end of January.

Not willing to wait this long, she contacted Joan Sigman, a friend in England who might be able to help her. "I love it," she said, "but it's the most extraordinary thing. I wore it to a club and men were talking to my breasts."

When the bra finally arrived, she anxiously tried it on and was surprised. It pushed everything up and everything in. With a new lease on life she decided to road test it by meeting her boyfriend at the Lion's Head bar. When he arrived he walked right on past her. When she finally caught his attention, he said, "You look like Lois Lane or Tinkerbell with implants. I didn't recognize you." She wondered if he only looked at women from the neck down.

As a further test, she borrowed a low cut shirt from a girlfriend and went with her to an arty restaurant in Soho. Even though

she admits that she doesn't have much cleavage to expose, she reports that on the second night, with all the pushing up and pushing in, she felt as if she were in a harness.

They soon forgot about the purpose of their mission and became engaged in a lively conversation. Suddenly, her girlfriend gasped. "That waiter," she muttered, "he's doing a cruise-by."

He cruised behind her once, then cruised back the other way. Finally he stopped by her side, stared down at her chest and said, "Can I help you, ladies?"

The dialogue had taken place, the promise fulfilled. The Wonderbra had done its job.

[This sounds almost too good to be true! Could the Wonderbra possibly help me show off my 42AAA's? I, too, can hardly wait for this marvel of engineering to show up at Victoria's Secret. Ed.]

[From the January 24th edition of the Arizona Republic; Original by Emily Prager, New York Times. Reprinted in the Alpha Zeta Cactus Flower.]

Gender "Straightjackets" and Transgender "Prisons"

by Heather Anne Hurd (TX-3409-H)

Upon emerging as a crossdresser several years ago, I experienced an enormous surge of freedom from the burden of the societally-dictated male gender role "straightjacket" we crossdressers painfully grapple with for much of our lives.

My new-found freedom was incredible, and since my wife, Colleen, is totally supportive of my crossdressing, and I don't have a profession which requires suppression of it, I was immediately able to "go public", doing everything I do as a guy, as a girl!

This was mind-blowing at first, and it still is, but after a year straight of appearing in public as a lady several times a week (at least!), and entertaining "full-time" ideas (I was in deep "Gender Euphoria"), I was startled by the realization that I had entered a self-imposed transgender "prison" of my own creation!

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In hindsight, it seems very ironic that I went from a shameful, guilt-ridden state over the need to express ANY femininity to seriously considering ditching all of my masculine traits, entirely! Even more amazing is that this shift occurred in less than a year! I had ended up feeling as if any masculinity I expressed was "incongruent" with my "new" status as a "male woman"! When I realized all of this, I was truly stunned! Fortunately, I hadn't done anything irreversible to my body during my "Gender Euphoria", as I realized upon my "awakening" that I would've definitely regretted it!

Finally, I discovered how wonderful it is to exist in a state of masculine/feminine duality, as opposed to exclusively one or the other. For most of us, this "balance" is of paramount importance to our well-being as human beings. Unfortunately,

there are many in the transgender community who selfishly pressure their sisters into eschewing their masculine sides completely, convincing them that if they don't, they're somehow inferior!

This is becoming a dangerous trend, and we crossdressers are very vulnerable, impressionable beings, therefore many lives are being ruined as a result. Taken to the extreme, a transgender "prison" is a needless "lifetime sentence" of pain and sadness!

In conclusion, both the Gender "Straightjacket" and the transgender "prison" can be avoided by simply allowing one's feminine and masculine sides to peacefully coexist in whatever proportion is natural for the individual. The end result, then, is a whole person, not just a half of one!

[Ed. Norte: Well and truly said! -JEF]

What is Love ?

by Ginny K.

When we get married or commit to a long term relationship we are well aware of the meaning of love, the excitement of finding someone with whom we can share our lives and build a future together. We recite our wedding vows - yes, even write our own vows to one another - to express our sincere feelings and promises to bring happiness to the family we hope to create and the life we will share.

Life goes on, then, and brings with it many joys and some adversity, such as family illnesses, deaths, challenges of raising children, natural disasters...sad but acceptable as part of life itself. We cope with them and conquer them with courage and determination.. and our love grows stronger.

Then one day you discover your loved one is a....what? A transvestite? A what? A crossdresser? What? This is an unexpected adversity! Surely, you jest! This is unacceptable! How can I love someone "like this"???

This is one of the times of your life you need to be reminded of what love is. Cut the next paragraph out and paste it to your refrigerator so you may both remember what the Bible tells us love is:

From the first letter
from St. Paul to the Corinthians:

Love is patient, love is kind,
It is never jealous.
Love is never boastful or conceited.
It is never rude or selfish.
It does not take offense,
And it is not resentful.
Love takes no pleasure in other
people's faults, but delights
in the truth.
It is always ready to excuse,
to trust, to hope, and to endure
whatever comes.
- (I Cor. 13:4-7)

Ed. Note: For those who may not know Ginny, she is not only the life partner of a gender-gifted person, but a lady whose love is demonstrated by her hard work on behalf of ETVC and the entire community. Her column appears regularly in the ETVC newsletter.

Private Lives

by Janice Soleau

Those of you who can and do dress "to the nines" as they say (I never knew where that term came from) may understand something. Most of us for whom crossdressing is a sometime, part-time thing we do at home, may not. I guess when most conventional married couples go out, the husband just showers, shaves, changes clothes and is ready to go. He wonders why it takes so long for his wife to get ready, even if she comes out looking gorgeous. At least this is how it used to be with some of us.

Well, those of you who dress to go out know it probably requires a bath or shower, the whole "what-to-wear" routine, the right wig, combed just right, matching accessories and of course there's the whole artist's palette of makeup. Decisions, decisions, decisions. What color eye shadow and lipstick to wear with your outfit.

I've never carried crossdressing to this extreme and my former wife was never a very dressy person, but I still wondered why it took her so long. Now I know how lucky I was she didn't wear the whole nine yards.

I suppose the well matched crossdressing couple is one where both plan to allow a couple of hours for this kind of preparation and enjoy every minute of it. Am I right?

I'd like to read letters from more of you. In this case I'd like to hear about that question from crossdressers who do go out

with their spouses. Most of my column is devoted to those of us who dress at home. Maybe the simplest way to respond is simply to write "Letters to the Editor".

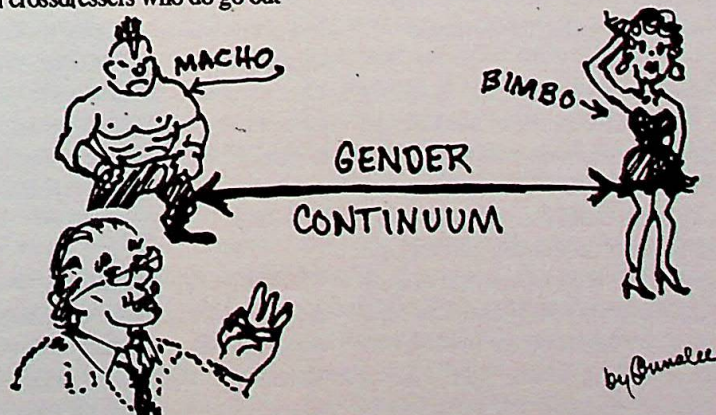
Some of you have loving spouses or partners. Some are active in a local group and see other "gals" every day or week. Others of us aren't in that same situation and that doesn't mean we're just not as far along as you. For some of us crossdressing is something to do at home - for a lot of good reasons. We depend on correspondence and the Femme Mirror to help us connect with other crossdressers. Even if you don't like writing letters, give it a try now and then. It can help others if it's positive.

I hope if I ever write anything really negative, the editors will edit it out. No need for anyone to be hurt. Another thing I would like to know from those of you who have partners, if you care to tell is: Does crossdressing enhance or inhibit your love life?

Janice S.

Ed. Note: Janice poses some interesting point to ponder. Those of you who would like to respond to Janice please address your letters to me care of the Femme Mirror and I will see to it they get forwarded to her for future publication or reference. Sounds like we could get a real discussion going here.

Brenda



"We all fall somewhere along this continuum
35 with the CD's usually in Limbo!" Spring 1994

Community

by Dr. Jaye E. Reviere

We are guilty! We, you and I, are guilty of defining in terms too narrow the wonderful word: "Community!" We talk about our community and frankly a lot of the time, most people do not know what we mean. We talk about community, and what we seek in other people is conformity. We want them to conform to our ideas, our beliefs, and our practices. This suggests a language problem as well as problem with honesty. I know what I mean, but I'm not sure I know what others mean. Perhaps we need to explore a bit more and find out just what scope and what meaning we really imply when we use the term "community." Perhaps too, we need to be honest with ourselves so we can be honest with others. Let's take a look at some things and see.

In making reference to "our community," most of us are thinking in terms of people who are like us in some way. We talk about the "gender community" as though it were some sort of clearly defined entity. It is not universally defined in clear terms. We talk about the "gay community" as though it were a monolithic social substructure clearly defined and unchanging. It is not universally defined in clear terms, either. We talk about the "Christian community" as though it were a shining example of precision in definition. It is not. All these are vague classifications, poorly defined and meaning something different to each person who utters the terms and each person who hears. We also talk about various "communities," referring to regional or geographic areas. We talk about something which is nebulous at best when we talk about "community," yet expect people to understand what we mean.

There are, obviously, communities within communities, all enmeshed and integrated into functioning components of the society in general. There are, according to the speaker/hearer's point of view, multiple strata of community and multiple variations within each stratum. This makes use of the word very imprecise and often misleading. We need to come to some kind of understanding about just what is "community" and how the term can be applied accurately.

As we approach the term "community," let us take apart the word a little. It begins with the two magic letters: "co." These two letters give the instant indication of something shared or something joined. This gives us the essential key to understanding what "community" means. It literally means the experience of having something, some trait, some location, some goal, some ideal, or something real in common. In essence, then, two people who share something meaningful in common form a community at the most basic level. From there, as more and more people are added to the group, community becomes larger (of course) and also more complex and more ill-defined.

As we address the issue of community, let us see if we can frame it in terms meaningful to us in particular. We talk, about ourselves, in the generic term of the "gender community." I don't know what this term means. I want to discover the meaning. I read all I can find, written by as many different writers as I can find, in relation to it. I seek, from their use of the term, the context in which they use the term and the implied meanings they give it, to determine, by implication and what ever way open to me, just what the term means. Sometimes this works. Sometimes it fails. Mostly, it fails because I'm not so sure the writers know what they really want to say with the term, so they apply it sloppily, meaning multiple things as they go along.

If this is indeed the case, and it does seem so to me, then we all need to step back and get real about the way we use words, terms, and labels in particular. We need to have a consistent standard by which all agree to common meanings and thereby achieve a higher level of understanding in what we write, what we say, and what we hear/read.

Let's look at "community" from the general to the specific. In general there is encompassing all, the "community of humanity." This encompasses all homo sapiens on the planet, all who have ever lived and all who live now and all who will ever live. This is far too general and too all

encompassing to be of real meaningful use. Let's next look at something we can call "the community of Western civilization." Again, this is exceedingly broad. Mahatma Gandhi, the intellectual credited with being the "Father of Modern India," was once asked what he thought of Western civilization. He replied: "It would be a good idea!"

Use of "community" in such a broad manner as speaking of a whole complex so huge as "Western civilization" is not even a good idea. It is far too nonspecific. Next let's narrow to address "community" as American society. Surely, we do have many things in common - shared experience, shared flag, shared income tax, shared pain-in-the-tush media, and many other things. Still for our purposes, for clarity especially, the characterization of American society as being "community" is too broad and unwieldy. It does not really say much, because it tries to say too much, all at one time. We can then regionalize in geographic terms, seeking to define "community" by a state, a region within a state, a city, a county, a town. None of these really touch what I believe we need to isolate and identify as the essential element in "community."

Perhaps, and I know I've been guilty of this, we react to the generic sense so often arising due to the wide variances within the regions, the interest areas, the experience patterns etc. which are called 'communities' by going overboard and defining "community" too narrowly. Of special interest, at this time in the life of this author, is coming to a clearer understanding of the shared nature of experience, between those of us who crossdress and those of us who experience sexual attraction and gratification mainly with members of our own physical sex. I'm saying, I've found we are straining largely at gnats and jousting at windmills when we seek to differentiate clearly and eternally between the "gay community" and ourselves. We do share a common bond.

In Albuquerque, NM, there is a community center dedicated to serving the needs of the homosexual population.

Seeking to draw together, on the basis of the common experience of being among society's rejects, the male and female homosexuals in the city, the center is indeed named: Common Bond. There is clearly a common bond between these two groups. This common bond has to do with society's rejection of their sexual identity and sexual expression patterns. I submit, we in the so-called "gender community" (yet to be defined) share the same common bond with both homosexual males and homosexual females. We, too, are among the social outcasts, only because we do not meet the rigid criteria of the socially approved gender stereotypes - man and woman.

Let us digress here a moment. We find we must use some common English words, for which we need to state clear definitions to be sure our use is understood.

Definitions:

Gender: those personal attributes, traits, behaviors, attitudes, and preferences which are associated with femininity and masculinity as clearly non-physical and non-sexual in nature. Gender pertains to the mind. Gender is in the spirit of a person.

Sex: those anatomical features of human bodies which are distinctly required in sexual reproduction, along with the few psychological traits, attitudes, and behaviors which are clearly related to those features, including brain anatomy; features clearly identified with sex-related hormonal and structural indicators; those physical features of humanity which relate to reproduction. For the most part, sex does not involve those attributes, attitudes, and functioning patterns identified as feminine and masculine, but does include those commonly identified as female and male. Sex pertains to the body. Sex resides in the genitals of the body.

Feminine: those behavioral attitudes, patterns, and traits, including preferences in self adornment and overall mental functioning, which are most commonly associated with the physical sexual characteristic of being female. *Feminine designators* such as *girl*, and *woman* are non-sexual terms, terms speaking to the person of the individual rather than to the physical sex of the body.

Masculine: those behavioral attitudes, patterns, and traits, including preferences in self expression and overall mental functioning, which are most commonly associated with the physical sexual characteristic of being male. *Masculine designators* such as *boy* and *man* are non-sexual terms, terms speaking to the person of the individual rather than to the physical sex of the body.

Gender related: Those things about a person which are not directly related to physical sex.

Sex related: Those things about a person which are directly related to physical sex.

Gender Identity: Those self concept elements of the person of an individual which are not sex related; e.g., gender-related

Sexual Identity: Those self concept elements of an individual which are related to physical sex; e.g., sex-related.

(Note: My intent is not to lecture or to impose a new lexicon on the reader, but rather it is to be as clear and as precise in stating my understanding as is humanly possible.)

For the continued purpose of our discussion of "community," let us stipulate the presence of communities within any specific community we might choose to delineate. In this paper, I want to think perhaps a bit more broadly than I have in the past. We want to think in much the terms as I set forth in my book *A Journey to Identity*. I want to try to see if there are possible avenues for integration of the two major "communities" of concern in our society.

The two major "communities" of concern, from my perspective, are society in general and the "community" of all of us who are "different," either in gender identity or sexual identity. We who are, for example, heterosexual yet genderally different, are in deep need of being understood, accepted, and integrated into the overall society. Likewise, those who are sexually different have the same need. All of us, Gender Atypical or Sexual Atypical alike, need within ourselves the same thing. One of the fundamental needs of human beings, according to Maslow, is to be held in high regard, to be honored, to be accepted, and to be respected by other human beings. To all of us who are in any way atypical, this

The Femme Mirror is often a very severely unmet need. We have tended to come together in cultural sub-groups, birds of a feather flocking together as it were, to seek to meet this need. I submit, this sub-grouping is socially divisive and not in the best interest of the society as a whole, although it does, superficially at least, tend to offer us some meeting of our needs.

Stressing our individual differences, being bigoted toward those with whom we share the common bond of being largely on the outside of society looking in, creating further division among us, is pure and unmitigated nonsense! I have been very guilty of this in the past, right up to the most recent past. I am unwilling to remain so, for I've seen how destructive this kind of mentation can be, especially among the clans, sects, and divisions which have arisen in the so-called "gender community."

What is this "gender community?" The best idea I can generate with which to define the "gender community" is a loose amalgamation of heterosexual cross-dressers at one extreme and homosexual crossdressers at the other extreme. Both these extremes are fairly small in number compared to the bigger middle in which we find people of all sexual persuasions, who for whatever reason, choose to express gender aspects of themselves which are contrary to the stereotypes established by society. These are a lot of words to define a simple thing, I know. Let's see if we can refine this definition a bit.

"Gender community" is a generic term used to identify a common experience of all people who in any way see themselves as being different in terms of society's stereotypes. Society stereotypes females as feminine and males as masculine. Therefore any female who has strong and expressed masculine traits can be seen to be part of the "gender community." Likewise, any male who is not decidedly "masculine" can be seen, in the broadest application of the term, as a member of the "gender community." Most of the time, the term is used with considerably less breadth. In general, the term is used in respect to crossdressers, both heterosexual and homosexual, who express their cross gender preferences and inner selves by their behavior and by joining one or more of the multiple organizations purporting to serve their needs.

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My point in addressing all this is to point out the diversity among us and yet the commonality we share. Each of our particular sub-groups is in reality, a true sub-grouping of highly similar individuals who in general share broader based characteristics, desires, needs, and identification with many people of many other sub-groups. There simply is no way, I assert, to bring all these atypical people into fuller functioning within the society in general as long as we continue to isolate ourselves in our little sub-groups and sit within those sub-groups with our guns pointed outward at all the other sub-groups; expressing a petulant "us versus them" attitude.

I want to point out the stupidity of being divided. Someone once articulated a military strategy: "Divide and conquer." By sitting in our little camps, our circles pulled tightly around us and our defenses on full alert, we are surrendering, by default, to the status quo of rejection and isolation imposed on us by the very society into which we so badly need to be integrated. This, I submit, is stupid behavior on our part.

We can all agree in general principle, I believe. We heterosexual crossdressers are guilty of circling our wagons, arming ourselves with various defenses, and reacting to other sub-groups with great and adamant fear. I know this has been my personal case. It need continue no longer either with me or with any person who may chance to read these words.

What is "our community?" Our community is whatever we choose to make it. Our community is whatever we choose to define it as being. We are of all sorts of individual characteristics, traits, manners, beliefs, and needs. *Yet, by placing major emphasis on those things which form our common bond, we can grow, we can mature, we can be fuller, richer and more complete human beings.*

We can achieve a healthy place in the society in general as we discard more and more of the past emphasis on what has made us unique and shift this emphasis more and more to those things we share positively in common. We are human beings first. We are feminine people. We are masculine people. We have many other things in common. Let us place emphasis

on these things, setting aside differences which can be overcome, and look to the time when a person is identified first as a person and then only in a few cases as something further down the division spectrum. Let us regard ourselves first as human beings of worth and quit letting others tell us, because we are different, we are somehow of less worth than someone else. Let us regard ourselves as lovable and loving human beings first and foremost. This I believe is the first step toward development of real community among us and all people.

We are as we are because we are. We are as we were made, not as a result of our making some sort of a decision. We are as we are in spite of the most powerful set of environmental influences ever marshalled, attempting to constrain us to previously defined stereotypes. We are as we are because God, in infinite wisdom and for purposes we don't have to understand, chose to make us as we are. This I believe.

What then lies in the future? Does real community lie in the future for us? We, other people and I, too, really hope so. The squabbling, the finger pointing, the power plays, the ego trips, the politics, the manipulations, the deceptions, the "me first" attitudes, and the other things which continue to divide us have to be discarded. Only then can we achieve real community on the grand scale I believe humans were intended to experience it.

There is much nitty-gritty work needed at the very small scale level. Attitudes among those of us who are in any way different are the first things which are in dire need of alteration. We need to learn who each of the others among us are. We need to get to know and learn to appreciate persons for being who, what, and how they are. We need to do this in contrast to the persistent divisiveness which now permeates the overall spectrum of "people who are different." This is our challenge. Our challenge is the great commandment of Jesus the Christ: "Love one another!" Are you willing? Will you make love number one in your life? I want to do so in mine.

Join me, please!

The Girl In The Gown

by Heather Anne Hurd
(TX-3409-H)

Across the room is a lady in satin
and lace,
With long flowing hair, and a
sweetly painted face,
So voluptuous, sensuous, shapely
and free,
Powdered, soft, and scented is she.

She's delicate, feminine, innocent
and sweet,
From her pretty head down to her
pretty feet,
Everyone near her gathers around,
Totally entranced by "The Girl In
The Gown."

But underneath her frilly things,
Is a special secret that's hers to
bring,
For no one could ever tell that she,
Is, in fact, actually a HE!

Realizing that he is free to be,
Anything and everything that is
"she",
He's laid all of his burdens down,
And now he's found ecstasy as
"The Girl In The Gown"!!



Confused

By Donna T. CO-2429-T

The possibility exists that I am the only one who is so easily confused, yet it would seem the rest of the world is not doing any better. Being a crossdresser can add confusion to any lifestyle and environment, even without external pressures. Questions always outweigh answers. The continuous flow of self doubt can often be traumatic, if not tempered with one's ability to laugh and relax a little from time to time. With all the social pressures, this can be a major task to attempt under the best of circumstances. When some one is alone it can compound the difficulty, because of not having anyone off whom we may reflect our thoughts and ideas.

Last week, for example, I was sitting in my study doing some low-range planning and reviewing my goals. One of them is to build a two-and-a-half car garage behind the house. While considering the cost, work involved and time required for this project, I thought of the value of the improvement. OOPS! That is where I may be in trouble. After all, last summer I saw signs everywhere that said: "Garage Sale." Some people were trying to sell their garages that were attached to their houses. I even went to look at a couple of them, but I couldn't get past all the junk they had in there to examine the garage. I don't know whether to build a garage or buy one, and worse yet, with so many people trying to sell them, I wonder if I want one!

Last week I drove by the barber shop and saw a sign in the window that read NAILS \$25.00. I have spent a lot of time at the lumber yard and \$25.00 buys a lot of nails, but why buy them at the barber shop? Every place I go it's the same thing! At the dentist last week it was a root canal - Now,

that is a great term and about as descriptive as T.V. or T.S. Best of all, after my root canal I had to pay for a gold crown. That is OK, but I have this great blue formal that would be really great with a silver crown with diamonds in it. I do wish the dentist would have just said gold tooth because that's all I got.

Would it not be correct to believe that a tow truck would be something that a foot doctor would drive? What about telephone poles? Ever see the phone? Last week on television I saw an ad for a new disposable douche, and now I wonder what was done with it before it was disposable.

You or I may not know the answers, yet the world demands that we accept these things and go on with our lives. OK. If that is the case, then I propose a trade-off: that all of us accept all this, and the world in return will accept our crossdressing. Sound fair to you?

Again, I am confused just a little. You see, I am unable to hear from my left ear as a result of an experience in Southeast Asia in 1969 - 1970. This condition has resulted in my having to adapt to careful listening and often to reading lips. This works fairly well most of the time. However, not long ago I was in a large crowd listening to some one speak. The topic was crossdressing and how society was becoming more accepting all the time. I am confused because I am not sure whether the speaker said "Monday noon" or "Someday soon." At least I have come to accept myself as a person who crossdresses. Perhaps that is more important than being accepted by a confused society that tries to sell garages, or that mounts clean up campaigns and then puts signs along the highway that say, "Fine for Littering."

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Turning The Inside Out - A New Perspective -

The male stance is a coat of armor.
Be tough!
Then they can't hurt you,
Can't get inside you.
Don't let them learn your soft spot.

Wrap yourself in lace, satin and silk,
Sheathe yourself in nylon,
Under a wig and a dress.
They'll never find you,
Never see that hard shell.

Now it's the masculine you hide.
You don't need it now.
Show them in your dress and manner
that you are gentle, warm, soft...
h u m a n

(as the woman inside you has
always been!)

-Jan (PA-2542-K)

Editorial Policy

The *Femme Mirror* is absolutely committed to protecting the security and confidentiality of all Tri-Ess members. In order to ensure this protection, the *Mirror* conforms to the following editorial policy:

- 1) The *Mirror* will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.
- 2) We encourage all contributors to the *Mirror* to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
- 3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
- 4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

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The Bliss of Becoming One

A Book Review By Brenda Thomas

I have just finished reading a promotional manuscript (at this time not for sale or distribution) sent to me by Rachel Miller, entitled "The Bliss of Becoming One". It deals with "Integrating Feminine Feelings into the Male Psyche, A Blueprint for Mainstreaming the Gender Community."

I was first contacted by Rachel about 4 months ago, requesting permission to include a couple of paragraphs I had written in the *Femme Mirror*. I immediately (well almost immediately - several of you know how slow I can be at times) gave my permission. Then about six weeks ago I received the manuscript. This is quite unlike anything I expected. What did I expect? I'm not sure. This book is designed as a self help book, more than a general reading book. Much thought and planning has gone into its format and style. This book is dedicated to helping every one of us accept ourselves as, masculine, feminine and most of all, human.

More than being just another book, it defines a movement. A movement that will "bring you and the entire gender community into the mainstream of society". "If you want to understand and accept your gender feelings and actions better, if you want your spouse or partner to accept your gender feelings and actions better, if you want to help others in the gender community, and if you want to make the world more open to the gender community, this book provides the framework and techniques for making those changes occur".

Why did I just quote out of the manuscript instead of trying to find the words myself to describe this book? How could I have said it better? This book does all of what it claims to do. It urges us to join in the movement for better acceptance of all mankind. It helps everyone who might possibly be in, or be curious about, or have a friend in, the gender community. It will help you break old stereotypical thought patterns

The book starts out with a little game playing, and what a wonderful game! You
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must gear yourself up to play the game in its entirety and let your imagination run a little. After all, it is just a game, or is it? While playing this game you will also find a dressing style, and a living style that best fits your personality. Isn't this something we are all searching for, anyway? There is even an area to record your answers so you can remember them and refer to them later. Great idea! Have you ever answered a question in a book, only to finish the book at a later date and not remember what your answer was? Then you know what I am talking about.

You will learn the difference between your perception and reality. You will learn techniques to allow you to change your outdated manner of thinking to include your feminine self in the thought process and bring that same self into reality. You will learn to challenge customs, as you know them to exist today. You will be able to perform these tasks without reservation. You will learn the "why and why not". This book will also challenge you to take a close look at your sexuality and to understand not only your sexuality, but quite possibly that of others with whom you may have disagreed in the past. I did not say "change your sexuality." I said "understand it." Large difference. You will be able to learn and understand the differences between crossdressers and transsexuals, and how to deal with some of their issues with an open mind. You will also be able to better understand the difference between homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual, (just in case you had a doubt at this point!).

This book will take you to places many of you have never been in dealing with and understanding your emotions. You will find out that this is not about "Dressing as a Woman". It goes much deeper than that. It is about "Being a Whole Person". It is about what is male, what is female. It is about integration and balance. Now where have we heard those two words before? You will learn how to connect with your feminine self, in a positive manner. But most of all you will learn that you are a whole person. And hopefully you will also learn what a whole

person is. How many of us do not know what a whole person is? Many, I suspect.

You will learn about change! You will learn that change is possible, and necessary. Change has taken place all through history, daily. Doubt me, anyone? Remember the Cold War and the Berlin Wall? Where is it today? Change, my friends, is not only possible; it is inevitable. You will learn how to accomplish this change. You will learn that change occurs in three steps; 1) I accept myself, 2) I accept society, 3) Society accepts me. You will come to see how this is possible, and you will learn the steps to accomplish this change. You must approach this with an open mind and a desire to effect change.

Are you willing? Are you willing to accept acceptance? We talked about this idea a couple of years ago, and it is amazing how many crossdressers are not willing to accept the acceptance that society is willing to give them. Acceptance depends on US, not on them! True happiness is "Accepting myself as I am"! You will learn that it is time to take charge of your life, and you will learn the methodology to accomplish this step. You will see the vision of a open society and will learn that it is possible.

You will learn to share. Yes, share. For through sharing comes understanding. It is through sharing that we as humans make progress. Can you imagine where this world would be had no one shared information from the past years? You see, sharing is really just history, and we learn from history. You will find in this book the chapter on helping directly behind the chapter on sharing. For sharing is helping. We help one another by sharing the stories of our lives - our successes and our failures. We learn from those experiences and we help others learn through those experiences.

How many of you have asked for help in dealing with or talking with your spouse about crossdressing? I know the answer is hundreds. I know because I was one of those. I learned much from the people who "shared" with me past experiences and methodology. This is how we effect change, by sharing and helping others. Sharing is

Coming Out - First Thoughts to Final Entry

By Lynda Hammond (CA-3663-H)

My first time coming out of the closet was a trying time for me. I was plagued by questions. Do I tell people or keep it a secret? If I do tell someone, who would it be? Would they understand or would they reject me?

Fear was the least of my problems. In fact, I think I can safely say that blind terror was what I felt. How do I explain this compulsion I have to dress like a woman? I have had this feeling since I was very young (I can't remember what age), but it didn't fully become a problem to deal with until I was twelve. I lived in a constant state of fear. What would happen to me if anyone found out? Would my friends make fun of me? Would I be an outcast forever among them? And what about my family? Would they support me or would they think I was crazy? Too many questions. Too few answers.

My first step in revealing my problem was when I decided to tell my mom. She was kind and listened to me as I explained, what I believed, was wrong with me. After all, this wasn't exactly normal behavior for a boy of seventeen. Was it?

She told me that she had known about it since we moved to California and I needed to see a therapist to get rid of the problem. She thought that it was something that could be cured. I didn't believe that I could be but never told her that. I was willing to try anything to fit in and be "normal". As it turned out, I mentioned my problem to a friend before I was able to see a therapist.

When I told her, she agreed to help me with my problem if she could. Bear in mind, I was still under the impression that I had a problem. It was she who first saw the Donahue show dealing with crossdressing and told me it was on. I watched the show with great interest. Until that point, I was under the impression that I had some sort of mental problem and was alone in this desire. It had gotten so bad for me that I began to question my sexuality and my sanity! Was I gay or simply born the wrong sex? One question was answered.

I wasn't gay, or a transsexual. I was just different, not crazy.

I wrote to Tri-Ess and anxiously waited for a reply. When it came, I felt like a kid on Christmas day. Something wonderful had been shown to me! I was not alone as I had thought! There were others like me; those who understood my problem. I saved all the money I could to become a member of Tri-Ess as soon as possible. Unfortunately, all my information was lost before I could.

I let myself slip back into my routine of hiding in the closet and only coming out on Halloween when it couldn't matter. I felt that it was the safest way to handle it. Several friends had joined the small circle of people who knew about my problem. Only one was kind enough to tell me that it bothered her. She understood why I did, but she didn't like it. I told her that I would keep my crossdressing away from her unless it was Halloween and she thanked me. I will be in debt to her forever for her honesty.

My greatest fear in revealing what I was came when I met the lady who would become my wife. I use the term "lady" because she is that, and more, to me. It was early in our relationship and I knew that this was the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. But how could I explain to her that I liked to dress up as a woman? Should I tell her or keep that secret to myself?

That was a problem I wrestled with for a very long time. I decided to be honest with her and hope for the best. Telling her was the hardest thing I had to do, but I felt that if our relationship was to have a good chance, honesty was the best way to begin. She understood and agreed to help me with my minor problems (such as make-up, outfits, etc.)

My wife and I were married on May 8, 1993, and are as much in love now as when our relationship started. She is my life and my strength. With her help, and the help of my sorority sisters, I will, finally, be

able to go out among people outside my apartment and worry about being "read". On the day, one I look forward to with anticipation and (yes, I admit it) fear, I will be able to hold my head up proudly and know that I am a whole person at last! I will have reached the end of my long journey into full womanhood. On that day, dear sisters, my life truly begins.

I wrote this, not just to empty my personal closet of some skeletons, but to help other crossdressers in overcoming any problems they might have that are similar to mine. Whether they wish to tell their spouses, friends or families about their crossdressing is not for me to say. All I can recommend is that they think very carefully before they do, and make sure the individual knows that they don't have to take part in it if it bothers them.

My very best wishes to you all for luck and understanding in the coming years!

Thought to remember: I think this quote from "The Dark Crystal" sums up what we are very nicely. (I'll explain my thoughts about it after, because I don't always make myself clear) -

"What was sundered and undone, shall behold the two made one."

(Personal thoughts: We, as crossdressers, are sundered and undone by trying to see things only in the male perspective as society dictates. We are one when we see, not only from the male side, but the female side as well, whether it is in life or in ourselves. True?)



Spring 1994

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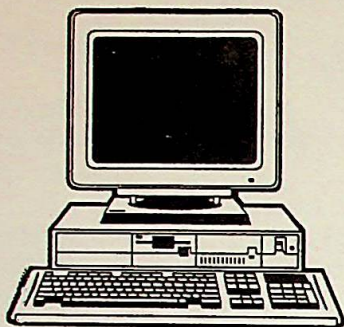
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Meet Your MIRROR Volunteers

**Calling All Computerized Crossdressers!
The Femme Mirror needs you!**



We are looking for a few good girls who can type about five Mirror pages each quarter from typed or handwritten copy. If you have a computer and would like to help produce your Femme Mirror, drop us a line at:

**The Femme Mirror
8880 Bellaire B2, Ste. 104
Houston, TX 77036**



Melissa Reed at her keyboard. She wins the prize for the fastest turn-around time so far. She was also the first to respond to our cry for help last fall. Thanks, Melissa! Your next batch will be in the mail shortly!!

When we ran this ad last time, we were hoping to get a few dedicated souls to help out with the typing of copy for the Femme Mirror. With enough helping hands, we reasoned, no one (namely, your Editorial Staff) would be unduly burdened as crunch time approached.

We are happy to report that, thanks to the volunteers listed below, this plan is working!! Laying out the Mirror this time was a breeze!! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!! Frances thanks you, Jane Ellen thanks you, Brenda thanks you, Jaye thanks you, and all our readers thank you!!!

We also wish to extend special thanks to every one of you who sent in your articles on disk. We can read most popular programs, large or small disks. If you've typed it on a computer anyway, please send the disk. If you'd like it back, we'll be glad to return it.

Is it too late for you to volunteer? Not at all! The idea is for no one to be given too much to do, right? As contributors send in material, we'll be sending batches of it out to our volunteers. The more, the merrier!

If everything you typed for us, or contributed on your own, does not appear in the current issue, watch for it next time. (Sorry, Maureen, your Christmas story will have to wait til the Fall issue. It's already in the 90's down here in Texas, and it's hard to get in the Holiday spirit!)

We'd love to publish your photos, too, so send them on in. Anyone can be a Cover Girl, even, so don't be shy! This is your magazine!

Now, let's have a big round of applause for our volunteers:

.....
• Melissa Reed IL-3856-H •
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• Vanetta TX-???? •
.....

Yeah, so your names aren't up in lights, exactly, but we're trying!! Thanks!!!

Coming Out

by Mike

Hello Mom,
Hello Dad,
I'm a Guy!
That's not so bad!

You ought to know.
It seems so plain
You'll never see me
In a bridal train.

I could just leave
But that won't do.
I must pronounce
For me and you,

This unspoken point
That seems quite clear,
Since others think me
Very Queer.

And I've never had
A Love, nor Beau,
And wear no dress
Nor other show.

Surely your mind
Has noticed this,
But your heart won't say,
"She's not a Miss,"

Because you fear
For me. You do.
But, God loves me
As God loves you.

So be happy that
I've found my place
And can be myself
With smiling face,

Never to feel
Deep remorse
For a life misspent
On a wrongful course.

Together we can
Our fears mend
And live our lives
As family and friend.

Don't you know
That now I'm free
To be the me
I was meant to be?

For unknown cause
I went through
A different path
Than given you.

Together let's learn
And grow and strive,
For now I feel
I am alive.

Passing Fancy

by Shannon May Burke

Just when a girl thought she was getting by..... I had anxiously awaited my luncheon date with a very dear friend.

Jane and I hadn't seen each other in awhile and I eagerly anticipated our renewed companionship. We met and proceeded to a nice little restaurant, jabbering all the while as we brought each other up to date. I felt absolutely radiant in my femininity and had not even contemplated an intrusion into my male side. Our conversation was interrupted by a guttural "Ahem!" I looked up to see our waitress for the day, a pinch-faced dour matron who was clearly not enjoying her job. She looked at my friend and queried, "What will madam be selecting today?" My friend made her selection and then our fair maiden turned her burning gaze on me: "And what will you be having today, SIR!" The last word seemed to have been torn from her throat.

Time stopped! But, Surprise! The expected dagger thrust to my heart was deflected. I can't really explain it, but I felt nothing except mild surprise. Maybe at some level I refused to let this person spoil a truly delightful day. I just felt so good! For some reason, I found myself giving her a big smile along with my order. Was it my imagination, or did she manage a small smile in return?

As our meal proceeded, her ministrations appeared to become more frequent, but less intrusive. At each of her visits to our table I found myself responding to her politely and cheerfully. By the time our check arrived, in my mind or in reality, her features had transformed to something softer and she was definitely smiling. On another day, I might have interpreted that smile as something other than flattering, but I took it as genuine. On our way out, our waitress came up to me and grasped my hands. "Thank you for coming, MA'AM! Please come again." A very warm rosy glow enveloped me, and it was, indeed, a marvelous afternoon.

What had happened? Did she think she had made a horrendous mistake in her early assessment of my gender, or had she realized that I was not a terrible ogre to be treated with disdain? My vanity prefers the former, but my heart believes the latter.

*Ed. Note: This poem was written by a female-to-male crossgendered person. It appeared in Issue 4, December 1993, of En*Gender, the quarterly newsletter of ReCast, Inc., a support organization for female-to-males. We reprint it here to remind ourselves that there are female-to-male crossdressers and transsexuals; they face the same doubts, fears, prejudices, hopes, and dreams as we do; only the pronouns are different. Tri-Ess, as an educational and social support organization for crossdressers, fully supports them in their efforts to deal with their particular gender gift.*





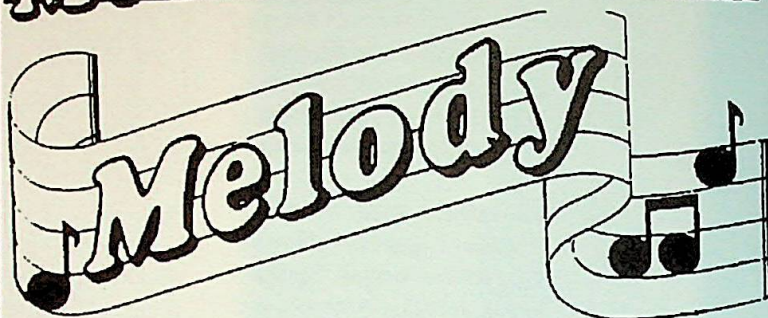
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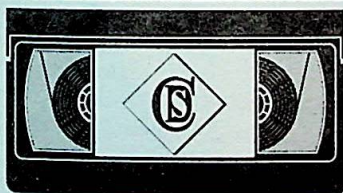
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CD DILEMMAS: BAD FIRST-TIME FEARS --- BUT THINKING MAKES IT SO!

Mary! Wait! Woe is me! Here am I, costumed as Ophelia, my first public appearance in a dress, and I really gotta GO! How now?! 2B OR NOT 2B? That is the question! Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them? -- 'Tis a consumation devoutly to be wished! --- BUT --- The UNdiscovered country into which I must travel, and from whose bourn I may not return, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than to fly to others we know NOT of ----- Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all; and the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, and enterprises of great pith and moment with this regard their currents turn awry, and lose the name of action! Mary! Think of the shame if anyone sees me and knows I'm -- O! -- This is BAD!

2B OR NOT 2B?!!



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Today: HAMLET

2:00 P.M.

ROOM 2D →

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COSTUME FROM
THE PLAY OF
THE DAY.

2B
LADIES

2A
MEN

Oh come on, Harry!
There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so! Like poor drowned Ophelia, too much of water has't thou! But Nature her custom holds; let shame say what it will! Lose not the name of action! Stop misquoting Hamlet's lines, and just go IN 2B and DOeth thou your urgent enterprises of great pith and moment; and let not their currents turn awry! -- AND forget NOT thy feet they pointeth forward! Don't worry, you look great! No one'll know you're not a lady! Hurry, though, or you'll be late!

A Bill Of Rights for Winners

1. You have the right to be you - the way you are, the way you want to be.
2. You have the right to grow, to change, to become, to strive, to reach for any goal, to be limited only by your degree of talent and amount of effort.
3. You have the right to privacy - in marriage, family, or any relationship or group - the right to keep a part of your life secret, no matter how trivial or important, merely because you want it to be that way. You have the right to be alone part of each day, each week, and each year to spend time with and on yourself.
4. You have the right to be loved and to love, to be accepted, cared for, and adored, and you have the right to fulfill that right.
5. You have the right to ask questions of anyone at any time in any matter that affects your life, so long as it is your business to do so; and to be listened to and taken seriously.
6. You have the right to self respect and to do everything you need to do to increase your self-esteem, so long as you hurt no one in doing so.
7. You have the right to be happy, to find something in the world that is meaningful and rewarding to you and that gives you a sense of completeness.
8. You have the right to be trusted and to trust and to be taken at your word. If you are wrong, you have the right to be given a chance to make good, if possible.
9. You have the right to be free as long as you act responsibly and are mindful of the rights of others and of those obligations you entered into freely.
10. You have the right to win, to succeed, to make plans, to see those plans fulfilled, to become the best you that you can possibly become.

Reprinted from the February 1994 issue of Ms. Cotton Belle, newsletter of Mu Sigma Chapter of Tri-Ess.